

WILD WEST



A MAGAZINE CONTAINING STORIES, SKETCHES Etc. OF WESTERN LIFE.

No. 388

NEW YORK, MAR. 25, 1910

Price 5 Cents

YOUNG WILD WEST'S QUICKEST SHOT

or, The Desperadoes of Diamond Dike.

WILD WEST WEEKLY

A Magazine Containing Stories, Sketches, Etc., of Western Life

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1910, in the office of the Librarian of Congress, Washington, D. C., by Frank Tousey, Publisher, 24 Union Square, New York.

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Young Wild West's Quickest Shot

OR,

THE DESPERADOES OF DIAMOND DIVE

By AN OLD SCOUT

CHAPTER I.

WHAT HAPPENED ON THE TRAIL TO DIAMOND DIVE.

Crack, crack!

Two revolver shots rang out in quick succession.

Then a scream sounded, followed by a crashing in the undergrowth.

The scene was near the trail that led to Tombstone, Arizona, and the time was a warm afternoon in autumn, a few years ago, when it was really dangerous to travel in that part of the country.

A young girl, who had been picking wild flowers, came upon an ugly black bear with her two cubs, and as the beast showed fight, she fired at it.

But the bullets failed to reach a vital point, and the result was that the angered bear started after the girl.

Straight for the rather high bank that overlooked the rocky trail ran the girl, the maddened bear in hot pursuit, while the two cubs followed as fast as they could.

"What is the matter, Eloise?"

The question was asked by a very pretty golden-haired miss, as she broke through the bushes and came upon the scene.

"Oh, Arietta! The bear! Shoot it—quick!" answered the frightened girl.

Crack! crack!

The newcomer understood what to do right away.

So accurate was her aim that the bear was blinded in both eyes, and the lumbering carcass went rolling upon the ground.

Just then a handsome, athletic boy, who was attired in a hunting suit, came running up the short slope from the trail.

"What is the trouble, girls?" he asked, coolly. "Oh! I see. A bear, eh?"

"Yes, Wild," answered the girl who had blinded the animal by her two well-directed shots. "Eloise wounded it, and then she had to run for her life."

The boy called Wild laughed.

"Well, I don't blame you, Eloise," he said, nodding to the girl, who had been so badly frightened. "But what made the bear show fight, do you know?"

"Yes, Wild," was the quick reply; "there were two cubs with her. I suppose she thought I meant to harm them."

"Oh, I see," and the boy, who was no other than Young Wild West, the well-known Boy Hero of the Wild West, gave a nod. "A she-bear is very ugly at times, I know."

Three others now appeared upon the scene.

They were Cheyenne Charlie, the scout; Jim Dart, a boy about the same age as our hero, and Anna, the wife of the scout.

They all appeared to be eager to find out what the trouble was.

But the moment he saw the wounded bear clawing and rolling upon the ground the face of Cheyenne Charlie lighted up, and pulling his hunting knife, he hastened forward.

He waited until he got the chance and then he quickly dispatched the bear by a quick thrust below the left fore-shoulder.

"There!" he exclaimed, "I sorter guess that settles ther

critter. Now then, Wild, s'pose I call ther heathens an' let 'em catch ther cubs?"

There was a twinkle in the scout's eyes as he spoke, for he was no doubt looking for fun.

"All right, Charlie; go ahead and call them, answered the boy, who had made such a name for himself all over the West, from his wonderful coolness and courage and daring exploits. "I think that will be a good idea. We stopped here for a rest, but we may as well have a little amusement. Call Hop and Wing."

The scout hastened to the edge of the bank that overlooked the trail and saw the two Chinamen employed as servants of the party taking it easy.

They were reclining upon the ground in the shade of a high rocky projection, and though they must certainly have heard the shooting, they did not appear to be interested one bit.

"Come up here, you yaller-faced heathens!" Charlie called out. "You're wanted."

"Allee light, Misler Charlie," came the reply from both, as though in one voice.

When they reached the spot where the dead bear lay they showed no surprise.

It was a common occurrence for Young Wild West and his friends to shoot bears, and all other kinds of game, for that matter.

"You come along with me," said the scout. "Git a move on yer, too!"

They followed him a short distance through the bushes and then they came upon the two cubs.

"Catch them two little kittens," Charlie said.

"Me no likee," declared Wing, the cook, as he shook his head and showed signs of uneasiness.

"Me catchee velly muchee quickee," spoke up Hop, who, as the majority of our readers know, was a very clever Chinaman, and in many ways. "Me do lat, Misler Charlie."

The cubs snarled as he moved toward them, and Young Wild West and his friends waited to see what would happen.

But instead of trying to pick up the two cubs, Hop drew a small silken rope from one of the pockets his coat contained, and with no little skill threw a noose about one of them.

Then he ran around in a circle a few times and had them both so much tangled in the rope in a few seconds that they were helpless.

"Lere you are, Misler Charlie," he said, smiling blandly as he handed the scout the end of the rope. "You gottee um lillie bears, allee light."

"That's right," and Charlie seemed to be rather disappointed.

Things had not turned out just the way he expected they would.

But it was only one of the many times the clever Chinaman had got the best of the scout.

"You may as well put the cubs out of the way, Charlie," said Wild, as he laughed at the way Hop had done it. "They are too young to live without their mother."

"That's right, Wild," and two shots settled the business. Then they all returned to the trail below.

Young Wild West and his friends were on one of their

trips in search of adventure, and they had halted for a short rest.

Arietta and Eloise had spied some very pretty flowers, and they had gone to pick them. They had been separated by but a short distance when the old bear and her cubs put in an appearance.

But it was all over now, and a few minutes later they mounted and set out along the trail.

The two Chinamen were leading the pack horses that were loaded with the camping outfit and provisions, they bringing up the rear of the little procession that was riding along the trail.

As we have stated, it was a very warm afternoon, but all of our friends were so used to the climate in that part of the country that they did not mind it so very much.

As we find them, they were about sixty miles southeast of Tombstone, and quite near the border line of old Mexico, and that of New Mexico as well.

The mountain scenery might have been called grand by one who looked upon it for the first time.

But it was old to our friends, and it was little attention they paid to it.

As they rounded a bend in the trail and came to a defile where it branched off to the left a rudely painted sign about two feet square loomed up before them.

Young Wild West brought his sorrel stallion, Spitfire, to a halt instantly.

It was the sign that caused him to do this, for he knew very well that the right branch of the trail was the one that would take them to Tombstone.

This was the place they had started for, though with no particular purpose in view.

They were simply riding about in search of adventure, that was all.

"Hello, boys!" the young deadshot exclaimed. "I reckon this is something new in these parts."

"I should reckon so, Wild," Cheyenne Charlie quickly answered, as he rode up to the side of the young deadshot.

Then they all read the sign, which was as follows:

"THIS WAY TO DIAMOND DIVE,

"The worst mining camp in Arizona.

"Stranger, pause before you hit this trail.

"JACK CORE

"(Commonly called 'The Boss Desperado of Diamond Dive')."

Young Wild West laughed as he finished reading the inscription.

"Well, I reckon that might scare some people and keep them from going that way, eh?" and he turned and looked at his companions.

"Probably it would, Wild," Arietta spoke up. "But I am quite sure it does not frighten you any."

"Not much, Et," was the cool rejoinder. "Even if I had pressing business in Tombstone, I'd put it off long enough to ride over to this place they call Diamond Dive. It must be a new camp, I reckon, because I have never heard of it before."

"That's what it must be, Wild," spoke up the scout. "But say, you don't s'pose that ther sign was put up to scare people from goin' there, do yer?"

"Well, hardly," and the young deadshot shrugged his shoulders. "The chances are that it was put there to attract the attention of the curious ones, and make them pay a visit to the place just to see what it was like. There are lots of people who would be bound to go there anyhow, after reading that sign. We belong to that class. We will ride over and see what Diamond Dive is like. The Boss Desperado sounds good to me. According to that there must be plenty of them there, and this man who calls himself Jack Gore is the boss of them all. Well, I just want to see what sort of a galoot he is."

"I suppose the place is full of very bad men, Wild," Arietta observed, looking rather grave. "Maybe some of your old enemies are there, and this sign was put up on purpose to get you to come there. You can't tell, you know."

"I hardly think that, Et," our hero answered. "But even if I knew it was that way, I would go, anyhow. Come on. Here goes for Diamond Dive!"

The dashing young deadshot urged his horse forward and started to ride through the defile.

Though there were evidences of a trail going through it, they were very slight indeed, and this meant that few people traveled that way.

The sun was getting pretty low in the west now, and as they rode along, the towering cliffs on either side of them, it soon became lost to view behind a distant range.

But it was not sunset yet, as they all knew, and they were in hopes of reaching the new mining camp before darkness set in.

The sign had failed to state just how far it was to Diamond Dive, so it was mere guesswork on the part of our friends.

The defile was probably a mile in length, and it finally broadened out upon a stretch of white sand that was dotted here and there with cactus.

It was one of the patches of desert so common in Arizona.

But it so happened that it did not extend very far, for probably five miles further on was a rugged slope that was covered with vegetation.

"Well," said Young Wild West, as he nodded to his companions, "I reckon we'll ride across this stretch before we put up for the night anyhow. It may be that Diamond Dive lies among the hills over there. After we get up a little distance we may be able to catch sight of it. If we fail to do that we will pitch our camp, that's all, and then start out in the morning for Diamond Dive."

The faint traces of a trail lay right before them, so they struck out through the sandy strip.

Five miles of that sort of riding was not to be called pleasant, but as we have said, our friends were well used to that climate.

They made good headway, and finally just as they were nearing the edge of the desert, two horsemen rode from behind the rocks and came toward them.

They seemed to be just ordinary cowboys, but as they drew nearer our friends could not help noticing that they had what might be called a bad look about them.

"Hello, gals!" called out one of them, as he rode up and brought his horse to a halt and looked at the girls of the party, without noticing their companions. "This is sar-

tinly somethin' nice. We ain't in ther habit of seein' sich putty gals in this part of ther country. Where might yer be goin'?"

"How far is the place called Diamond Dive from here?" asked Wild, coolly.

"What's that yer say, young feller?"

It was the one who had spoken to the girls who asked the question, and he looked at the boy in a half-angry way.

"How far is it to Diamond Dive?" Young Wild West asked the question very coolly, though there was just a flash of anger in his eyes.

"You ain't goin' there, are yer, young feller?"

"Yes, I reckon we are."

"Well, Diamond Dive is jest about three miles an' a half from here. All's you've got to do is to foller ther trail an' you'll come to it."

Then the man urged his horse close to the side of Arietta and reached out his hand, no doubt intending to chuck her under the chin.

But the girl was too quick for him.

She quickly drew her horse aside and struck his arm at the same time.

"You're what I call a sassy gal," said the villain, for there was no doubt but that he was such. "I ain't in ther habit of havin' gals to use me that way when I wants ter chuck 'em under ther chin. I am Jack Gore, an' I've been nicknamed ther Boss Desperado of Diamond Dive. Maybe you people might have read ther sign at ther end of ther defile."

"Oh, yes, we read that, all right," said Wild, as he let his horse walk up close to that of the desperado. "That's why we started on the way to Diamond Dive. So you're Jack Gore, the Boss Desperado of Diamond Dive, are you?"

"I reckon I am, young feller."

"And you have a way of insulting ladies you have never seen before, too, I see?"

"I have a way of doin' jest as I please."

"Is that so?"

"Yes, that's so."

"Well, so have I. How does that strike you?"

As the boy spoke he brought his right hand around with all the strength he had.

It caught the villain on the side of his head and sent him flying to the ground.

The other villain looked very much surprised, but quickly made a move to draw the gun that hung at his right side.

"Let go of that, you sneakin' coyote!" exclaimed Cheyenne Charlie, as he covered him.

The villain obeyed.

Meanwhile Young Wild West had leaped from the saddle, and as the Boss Desperado, as he called himself, was in the act of rising he struck him with his clenched fist and sent him flat upon his back again.

"Get up, you big galoot!" he exclaimed, his eyes flashing. "I am going to give you the worst thrashing you ever had in your life. You hear what I say! I am only a boy, too. But I reckon I can handle half a dozen such as you are."

If there ever was a surprised man it was Jack Gore just then.

It had all happened so suddenly that he hardly com-

prehended what had caused him to fall from his horse before he received a blow full in the face.

Dazed and confused he rose to a sitting posture and looked around in a bewildered way.

"Get up!" cried the young deadshot. "I didn't give you the chance that time, but now I will. Get upon your feet. I will teach you that it is not good policy to insult ladies."

"What's ther matter, Tom?" the desperado asked, as he finally turned and saw his partner sitting still in the saddle, his hands up and an expression of fear and astonishment showing on his face.

"They've got the drop on me, Jack," was the reply. "I guess you made a mistake in actin' ther way yer did. You had better apologize, 'cause if yer don't that boy will clean yer out. He's a regular cyclone, he is."

"'Pologize!" Jack Gore fairly yelled. "That's somethin' I never done in my life. I'll kill ther young galoot, that's what I will. I'll——"

Spat!

Young Wild West sent a blow straight from the shoulder and caught him squarely between the eyes.

The villain staggered back a few paces and then dropped to the ground as limp as a rag.

"Now then," said the dashing young deadshot, turning to the man who had been called Tom by his companion, "you need a little of that same kind of medicine. Get down off your horse! I know pretty well that you are one of the desperadoes of Diamond Dive. That is why I want to get at you. I am Young Wild West. Maybe you have heard of me before. If you haven't, you will remember me as long as you live. Get down off that horse!"

"Young Wild West!" gasped the man, never making a move to obey the command. "Yes, I've heard of yer. But say! I don't want ter fight. I never said nothin'; it was Jack. I didn't want ter insult ther gals. I was with him, that's all, an' I can't help that."

"Get down off that horse!"

This time the command was imperative.

The villain lost no time in obeying now.

But as he stepped toward him Wild did not have the heart to strike him with his fists, since there was no sign of a defense offered.

But he did slap him lightly with the palm of his hand, and then he said:

"You are the worst coward I ever met. There is no fight in you, I can see that. Now then, I give you just five minutes to get your partner on his horse and light out. Go ahead!"

The boy calmly pulled his watch from an inner pocket of his coat and looked at the time.

Tom quickly sprang to the side of his fallen comrade.

But the Boss Desperado had only been stunned temporarily, and as he felt himself being assisted to his feet he came to entirely.

"Come on, Jack! We've got five minutes ter git out of sight. It's Young Wild West an' his pards. You've heard of 'em. There's lots of our gang as knows all about 'em. Come on!"

Jack Gore permitted himself to be assisted to his horse.

Tom helped him to mount, and then without looking behind him, he rode away in the direction the two had appeared from.

Tom was not long mounting and following him, and as the two rode away, our hero called out:

"We will meet you again at Diamond Dive. Be careful how you act."

The next minute the two desperadoes were out of sight.

CHAPTER II.

CALLING A CROWD.

Young Wild West mounted his horse when he saw the two desperadoes disappear from view.

"They got a little surprise," he observed, and he smiled grimly. "Et, the next time they meet us I hardly think the Boss Desperado of Diamond Dive will be so familiar with you."

"I guess not, Wild," the girl replied, her eyes flashing as she thought of how the man had acted. "If I had been alone when he tried that on me I would have shot him."

"Oh, I know that. I know you can take care of yourself all right, Et. Well, the galoot had an awful nerve, anyhow. But he soon got the starch taken out of him. I never gave him the least chance. It didn't take so very much to settle him, however."

"Well, I don't know about that," spoke up Jim Dart. "I think he received quite enough to settle almost anyone. You certainly hit him hard, Wild. When you knocked him from the saddle with the flat of your hand it was quite enough to put him out."

"Yes, but if he had had any sand in him he would have made a better move than that."

"But jest see what ther other one done," said Cheyenne Charlie, a broad grin on his face. "Why, when he found that I'd covered him there was not ther least bit of fight in him. Wild couldn't have made that fellow fight if he had pulled his nose and pinched both his ears. He beat anything I ever seen in ther line of a coward."

"But that don't say that he is not a dangerous man, Charlie," the scout's wife remarked. "Maybe he is not one of the sort who will fight openly. But what he will do on the sly is another thing."

"Yes, I suppose that is about ther size of it, gal. But Wild says we're goin' ter Diamond Dive, so I reckon we'll have a chance to find out somethin' more about them an' ther rest of ther gang what's there. If they git the best of us they'll have ter be mighty smart, I sorter reckon."

The party soon reached the edge of the sandy stretch, and then it was not long before they were riding among the rocks and found bushes and scrub trees growing on either side of them.

The further they advanced up the slope the more green the vegetation became.

But the soil was different here, and it must have been that the ground was full of springs, for here and there a tiny stream of water could be seen trickling.

This was not a common sight so close to the edge of a strip of desert waste, so when they came to a good-sized brook they halted and tasted the water.

It was cool and sweet, so not knowing just what they might strike when they reached the new mining camp, they filled all the vessels they had with them.

"It might be that the principal thing in the drinking line to be found at Diamond Dive will be whisky," said our hero. "As that is something that neither Jim nor I ever use, in any shape or form, nor do you girls use it, we would be pretty badly off if we should happen to want a drink when we get there."

"Me likee tanglefoot allee light, so be," spoke up Hop Wah, who was sometimes called Young Wild West's Clever Chinaman.

"Oh, yes, you could swim in it, you heathen," Cheyenne Charlie quickly retorted.

"Lat allee light, Misler Charlie. You likee lillee dlink of tanglefoot sometimes, so be."

"Yes, I do like a drink when I feel as though I need it. But I don't fill myself full of it every time I git ther chee like you do."

"You neevee mind, Misler Charlie. You no see me allee samee dlunk. Me velly smartee Chinee; me know when me gittee enough."

"Yes, yer know it all right, when yer git enough, but that's about all yer kin say. If yer was to take about one drink after yer got what yer thought was enough, you would go to sleep, an' then yer wouldn't know nothin'."

"Allee light, Misler Charlie. You havee you own way. You velly smartee man."

The scout was about to say something further, when his wife advised him to let it drop.

"You know very well," she added, "that Hop is bound to have the last word."

"Yes, I know that," Charlie declared. "He's somethin' like a woman. Ha, ha, ha!"

That put an end to the argument, and for the next mile the party rode on in a happy frame of mind.

Young Wild West and his partners were keeping a sharp watch as they rode along, for they knew quite well that it would be nothing strange if the two villains should take a notion to try and get square for what had happened to them.

But it seemed that this was not the case, for when they reached the top of the ridge they did not have to ride far before they came in sight of a small collection of brand new shanties and tents.

They at once came to a halt, for the little mining camp showed up somewhat different from the majority of those they were in the habit of seeing.

It lay in a flat hollow that was an enlargement of a ravine, and was shaped almost exactly like a diamond.

At each end the ravine narrowed and continued both ways.

"That's where the diamond part of the name for the place comes from," said our hero, as he pointed to the camp. "It is shaped like a diamond, all right."

"Well, I s'pose a man could dive from ther top of one of them cliffs all right; then ther other part of ther name could be put to it," spoke up Cheyenne Charlie, grinning.

"Or there might be a saloon there that is called a dive," suggested Jim Dart.

"Well, the only way to find out why the place was named Diamond Dive is to ride on down there, I suppose," and so saying Young Wild West started his horse forward to descend the winding trail that ran to the bottom of the ravine.

It was only about a mile in a straight line, but in order to reach it they would have to cover easily twice this distance.

But they were used to that sort of thing, for they had spent many days in the mountains.

They did not ride very fast, and it took them fully ten minutes to reach the foot of the descent.

Then as they struck the spot that was shaped like a diamond they rode directly to the center of the camp, which was not a very large one, since there were not more than a dozen shanties and probably as many tents there.

It was now past six o'clock, and the miners were through work for the day.

There were but few trees to be seen in the camp, and these were located directly before a rather pretentious-looking shanty that had a sign across the front bearing the name "Diamond Dive."

"There!" exclaimed Jim Dart. "I told you that probably the saloon was called a dive. It is called Diamond Dive, and that is no doubt what the mining camp takes its name from."

Standing before the shanty saloon were probably twenty rough-looking men.

But rough-looking men are always to be found in any mining camp, so that did not signify that they were villains.

But since the sign at the beginning of the defile indicated that it was a very bad camp, our friends took it for granted that the majority of the men there must be of the villainous type.

A few more men came out of the saloon as the party rode up, and some were seen coming from the shanties and the store that was located but a short distance from the saloon.

By the time Young Wild West and his friends came to a halt in the dusty roadway before the saloon there must have been fully thirty-five gathered there.

"How are you, boys?" the dashing young deadshot called out, as he nodded to them. "I reckon this is the place that is called Diamond Dive, isn't it?"

"It sartainly is," replied a bareheaded man who was conspicuous in a flaming red shirt. "Can't yer read ther sign over my door? I'm ther one as give ther name to ther camp. Yer might have took notice that ther ground here is shaped very much like a diamond. Well, I was ther first one as ever struck this place. I slipped from ther top of the cliff back there an' dove down head first. I hit in a tree that used to stand back there, an' that saved my life. There was more with me at ther time, an' when I proposed that we call ther spot Diamond Dive they all agreed with me. That was a little more than six months ago. You kin see how we've growed in that time. I struck it rich right away, but as I didn't feel that I was born to do hard work I started this whisky mill. I called it Diamond Dive, after ther place. I'm Bully John an' I'm a real dandy at about anything that's goin'. Now then, Young Wild West, what do you think of Diamond Dive?"

"Oh, it's all right," replied our hero, in his cool and easy way. "But how does it happen that you know me?"

"Well, I met you down in Yuma once. Maybe you don't remember it, 'cause I never had anything to say to yer at ther time, but I sartainly seen yer there, an' all of the rest

of them what's with yer. I know you're ther Champion Deadshot of ther West, an' that it takes about fourteen men ter scare yer, an' even then they don't scare yer much. But I sorter reckon that you made a little mistake in comin' here."

"Oh, I guess not," and Wild looked at him, laughingly. "I think we'll get away, all right."

"Maybe yer will, an' maybe yer won't. Accordin' to what Jack Gore, ther Boss Desperado of Diamond Dive, says, I hardly think yer will. You sorter treated him mighty bad, from ther looks of him."

"Well, he will get worse than that if he interferes with me again. But say, Bully John, are all the men in Diamond Dive desperadoes?"

"I reckon that's what every galoot here calls himself," was the quick reply.

"Well, how many of you are there?"

"Ther last time we counted up there was jest thirty-eight, an' every man is proud to be called a desperado. That word desperado comes from ther Mexican, or some other confounded language, I reckon. But it sorter struck us as bein' a putty high soundin' word, so we adopted it. When you're lookin' at these men you're lookin' at ther desperadoes of Diamond Dive. We're all here, 'cept Jack Gore an' his right bower, which is ther two what you met back on ther trail. You shouldn't have come here, Young Wild West."

"Well, I don't know as we would have come here if we hadn't seen the sign at the mouth of the defile back on the Tombstone trail. But since we are here I guess we will stay until we get ready to leave. I suppose you have no objections if we pitch our camp somewhere around here?"

"Not a bit! Go ahead. Stop anywhere you like."

The man laughed as he said this, and then several joined in with him, as though they thought it was all a big joke.

"I suppose," said Wild, after he had taken a look around him and selected what he thought would be a good spot to stop at, "that you mean to make it warm for us."

"Oh, we ain't sayin' nothin' now about that," the owner of the saloon answered quickly. "I jest told yer that yer made a mistake in comin' here, that's all."

"You say there are thirty-eight of you here?"

"Yes, that's jest ther exact number of us."

"Well, if you attempt to interfere with us while we are here there will be a whole lot less than thirty-eight when we get through with you. You hear what I say! Now then, open up your game just as soon as you feel like it."

As the young deadshot said this he jerked both revolvers from his belt and held them out so the crowd could not fail to see them.

Cheyenne Charlie quickly followed his example, and then the girls unslung their rifles and leveled them toward the desperadoes, as they seemed pleased to call themselves.

"Why don't yer begin?" the young deadshot asked, as he smiled at them. "You might as well start right in now, for I know quite well that it is your intention to clean us out."

Then there was a deathly silence.

The villainous gang standing about looked at each other,

while some of them shrugged their shoulders and moved their feet uneasily.

"See here!" said Wild, raising his voice. "I'll bet a hundred dollars there is not a man in the crowd who dares to lay his hand on the butt of a gun. Who wants to take me up?"

There was no reply.

The young deadshot waited for a full minute, and then he gave vent to a laugh.

"You're the sickest lot of desperadoes I ever saw," he declared. "Why, there is not enough sand in the whole bunch of you to make a scratch on a picture frame. Desperadoes! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wow, wow!" yelled Cheyenne Charlie, who was just itching for a fight. "Whoopee, whoopee! I'd jest like to see ther galoot in this crowd as dares to touch ~~him~~. Where in thunder is ther Boss Desperado, anyhow? He's ther one I'd like to git a shot at."

But neither Jack Gore nor the man called Tom chose to make their appearance just then.

Knowing that he had them thoroughly cowed for the time being, Young Wild West now turned his horse and calmly rode over to the spot he had picked out as a suitable one to pitch their camp.

But Charlie and Jim took care to keep a watch behind them, for they did not know how soon something in the line of treachery might be shown by the desperadoes.

CHAPTER III.

• HOP WAKES UP THINGS AT THE SALOON.

Young Wild West took care to halt at a place where there would be an excellent chance of defending themselves in case the desperadoes went so far as to make an attack.

So many times had they been attacked by villains while in camp that Wild always made it a point to see to it that there would be a chance for them to offer a resistance that would prove telling upon their foes.

Wild's partners always thought of this, too, and as they halted and dismounted Cheyenne Charlie gave a nod of satisfaction and said:

"I reckon this spot will do, all right. Ther chances is that we're goin' ter have a hot time of it while we stay in Diamond Dive, an' we might as well fix ourselves for it. That shaller cave under ther bank there will do mighty well for ther gals to git inter if that feller called Jack Gore undertakes to come here with his gang. But he won't do much, not while we're looking at him. They're all a mighty cowardly lot, as far as I kin see. I s'pose they've had their own way so much that they've jest gone right ahead till they've took ther notion that it was easy for 'em to do as they pleased with anyone as come along. But I reckon they'll find out that they can't fool us, eh, Wild?"

"Oh, I think they've found that out, all right, Charlie," the young deadshot replied. "I suppose we could just as well have left the camp and gone about our business. Then there would have been no trouble. But that is not my way of doing business. When I find that there are bad men who are anxious to get me I can't help staying where they are to see how they will act. We'll stay here until the

desperadoes, as they call themselves, will be tamed down a little. Anyhow, we've as much right here as anyone else."

"That's the way to look at it, Wild," spoke up Jim Dart. "We have a perfect right to go ahead and stake out claims here, if we feel like it."

"Well, I am not in the humor to do any prospecting just now. We will just stay here and make it our business to tame Diamond Dive, or the people in it, I should say."

The two Chinamen now began unloading the pack-horses, and it was not long before the camp was being rapidly put in shape.

The two tents were put up directly before the hollow cave the scout had spoken of, and with the big rocks that ran out on either side of it, it certainly was pretty well protected.

If anyone came there during the night to surprise them they would either have to crawl over the rocks at either side, or come straight to the camp, where the ground was quite level all the way to the sandy street that ran through the mining camp.

Wild knew quite well that the villains would not interfere with them so long as it was daylight.

The way they had acted told that quite plainly.

As soon as the tents were put up Wing, the cook, proceeded to gather some dry brushwood that he might kindle a fire to cook the evening meal with.

There were plenty of dead limbs that had fallen from the top of the cliffs, so it was not a difficult matter to get all the firewood they would need.

Hop joined him in the work as soon as he had taken care of the horses, and then it was not long before the fire was blazing.

It was not yet dark when the supper was over with, and as our friends looked in the direction of the Diamond Dive saloon they saw that there was quite a crowd gathered there.

Some of the men had gone away soon after they left it and pitched their camp, but they had returned now and were no doubt wondering what Young Wild West proposed to do.

What our hero did propose to do was to go over to the saloon, just as though nothing had occurred to set the villains against him.

He knew that by acting in that way he would make them understand that he was not afraid of them.

"Come, Charlie," he said, "we'll take a walk over there and see how things are going."

"All right, Wild. That's jest what I was goin' ter suggest," the scout retorted, as he gave a nod of satisfaction.

"Me wantee go, too, Misler Wild," spoke up Hop, looking at our hero in a pleading way. "Me gottee velly muchee pain, so be; me wantee lilee dlop of tanglefoot."

"What gave you a pain, Hop?" the boy asked, as he smiled at the clever Chinaman. "Did you eat too much supper?"

"Maybe so, Misler Wild; me gottee velly muchee pain, so be."

"Well, you can go. Maybe you will be of some help in showing the men over there that it won't be good policy for them to interfere with us. If you show them two or three of your mystifying tricks they will have considerable respect for you. They are a very ignorant lot, I should

judge, and it is likely that superstition runs rife with them. Be ready to give them something good as soon as you get over there."

"Allee light, Misler Wild," and the Chinaman smiled blandly.

He seemed to have forgotten all about his pain, too, for he straightened up and hurriedly got ready to leave the camp.

Jim was left in charge, as he usually was, and he was perfectly satisfied with the arrangement.

Not that he was afraid to face any man in the mining camp, for Jim's bravery could not be questioned.

But he seemed to like the companionship of Eloise, especially as she was teaching him a great deal of what she had learned at the public school she had attended in Minnesota before she came to the Wild West.

Young Wild West and Cheyenne Charlie walked leisurely toward the saloon.

Hop followed on a little behind them, stepping along with the air of one who was of some importance.

No one said a word to them as they reached the front of the saloon, but those before the door stepped aside and permitted them to pass in.

Wild knew very well that he was taking a considerable risk, for if they were as bad as they tried to make out they were they could easily have opened fire unexpectedly.

But he relied upon the impression he had made upon them, and so walked boldly into the big room that was used for a bar, as well as for lounging and gambling purposes.

The boss of the place was behind the little counter himself.

There were but few customers inside, though several rough-looking fellows were seated on a long bench that ran across one end of the room and two were sitting at a table throwing dice for money.

They all looked up as the three entered, and it was with no little surprise that they gazed at them.

"Landlord," said Wild, in his cool and easy way, "I reckon we'll have some cigars."

"All right," was the reply, and the proprietor promptly put a box before them.

Wild, Charlie and Hop each took one, and proceeded to light them.

The young deadshot paid the bill, and then he coolly surveyed the interior of the saloon.

"You must do a pretty good business here, boss," he observed, as he turned and looked at the man behind the bar.

"Oh, yes," was the reply. "When ther camp was first started here ther boys allowed that they must have a whisky-mill here, so it fell ter me to start her up. I don't mind sayin' that there's about as much money in runnin' a place like this as there is in diggin' an' washin' for gold dust. So long as ther boys are putty lucky I'm bound to do business. They've been mighty lucky of late, so I'm doin' mighty well. But say! I'd like ter ask yer a question, Young Wild West."

"All right; go ahead. I'll be ready to answer it."

"What made yer come here to Diamond Dive?"

"Oh, is that all you want to know? Well, I'll tell you. We were on cur way to Tombstone, and we happened to

see the sign that was posted at the end of the defile. It struck us all as a little peculiar, so it was from mere curiosity that we decided to come here. But I don't think this is such a bad place as the one who painted that sign tried to make out. We have been in worse places than Diamond Dive."

"Well, the place is all right," the proprietor admitted. "But it seems that we've got a set of men here who are all of ther same mind. They made up their minds that they was goin' ter run things ther own way, an' they've been doin' it ever since they started. There's been quite a few to come here what don't agree with 'em, an' they've either turned up their toes or quit and looked for some other place to locate in. I will say that ther boys is what might be called a putty bad lot. They call themselves ther Desperadoes of Diamond Dive, an' when they once git started you'll think they're desperadoes, all right."

"What does a fellow have to do to start them?" asked the boy, just as though he was innocent and looking for information.

The boss of the saloon shrugged his shoulders.

This question seemed to perplex him.

Before he could make a reply Jack Gore, who had called himself the Boss Desperado, came in by the back way.

He was followed by the man who had been with him when he met our friends at the edge of the desert strip.

It was evident that neither of the two villains expected to see Young Wild West in the place, for they halted instantly and acted as though they did not know whether to come on or go back.

"Good evening, Mr. Gore," said Wild, in his cool and easy way. "Don't be alarmed. We are not going to hurt you. Come right on in."

"I reckon I ain't alarmed any," the desperado returned, trying to be cool and making a failure of it. "What happened out there on ther trail don't say that I'm a four-flusher, or anything like that."

"I didn't say so, Gore. But you acted rather peculiar when you saw us, and I thought maybe you might take a notion to go out, thinking that you were not wanted here."

"Oh, no, it wasn't that, Young Wild West. You mustn't think I'm a bit afraid of you. You sorter took me by surprise when you knocked me from my horse, but that don't say that I'm afraid of yer. I happen to be one of them kind what knows when it's best ter take water. Anyone as knows enough for that generally lives about ther full length of his life."

"Well, you have got that pretty nearly right."

Gore now stepped to the other end of the bar, followed by the man called Tom.

The two were served with drinks by the boss, and they paid no further attention to our friends.

Hop now thought it about time to give some sort of an exhibition to make the men of Diamond Dive wake up.

But he had not been supplied with his tanglefoot yet, so he laid a half-dollar on the bar and said:

"Me likee havee lillie dlink, so be."

"All right," the proprietor retorted. "Yer kin have it. What do yer want, whisky straight?"

"Me takee lillie tanglefoot, so be."

There was a nod and then a bottle and glass were put

before him, while the proprietor examined the coin and dropped it into the drawer behind the bar.

Hop swallowed his drink, and then he slowly walked to the center of the room.

Wild and Charlie knew very well that he was getting ready to give one of his peculiar performances, though they did not act as though they were at all interested.

The clever Chinaman acted as though he were in deep thought for the space of a minute, and then he suddenly drew from his pocket what appeared to be a half-burned candle.

He gave a nod and then called out loudly:

"Evelybody watchee! Me velly goodee shot, so be. Me showee you nicee lillie tick."

Stepping over to a corner of the room where there was an old-fashioned clock setting on a shelf, he carefully placed the candle on top of the clock, and then striking a match, lighted it.

As soon as the flame showed he stepped back about ten feet and pulled the old-fashioned six-shooter he always carried from one of the many pockets his loose-fitting coat contained.

Having heard his voice those outside began crowding in now.

Something was going on, and they wanted to see what it was.

"Evelybody watchee!" called out Hop, as he raised his revolver. "Me allee samee shootee and puttee outtee um candle, so be. Um clock stoppee at um same timee. Evelybody watchee! Me velly smartee Chinee!"

Then he raised the big revolver and pointed it toward the clock.

He waited fully ten seconds, and then just as he saw the flame of the candle give a peculiar sputter he pulled the trigger.

Bang—bang!

A double report rang out loudly, and the clock fell from the shelf with a crash.

The room was filled with smoke instantly, too, and yelling and pushing those inside tried to get out.

"Hip hi!" shouted Hop, as he ran back to the door. "Me makee allee samee velly goodee shootee, so be. Hip hi! Hoolay!"

The proprietor stood as if transfixed.

He could see the Chinaman before him, but there was so much smoke that he could not see anything more than the moving figures of the men as they tried to get out of the place.

Wild knew very well that the Chinaman had done quite enough to start a row, but since he had told him to show them something startling he, of course, meant to stick to him.

"Take it easy, everybody!" he called out. "No one is hurt. Our clever Chinaman, Hop, has just performed a magic trick, that's all. Don't get alarmed. Come on back. The smoke will soon be out."

The boy's words had the effect of quieting the men.

It did not take long for the smoke to get out of the building, since there were a couple of open windows, and when the crowd came surging in again they saw that the clock was broken into pieces that were scattered all over the floor.

The proprietor saw this too, and a frown showed on his brow.

"That was sartainly a good shot you made, heathen," he said, as he looked at the grinning Chinaman. "But you have done a mighty bad piece of business. That clock was ther only one in Diamond Dive, an' I prized it a whole lot. It's goin' ten cost yer fifty dollars for that good shot of yours."

"Lat allee light," was the cool reply. "Me pay velly muchee quickee."

The face of the boss lighted up instantly.

The fact was that he told a lie when he said it was the only clock there was in the mining camp, for he had another that was much better in the back room off the bar.

To get fifty dollars for the one that had been destroyed ~~sacred~~ to be like picking up money, so to speak.

But Hop coolly counted out the money and slipped it over to him.

"That's all right, heathen," observed the owner of the place, as he pocketed the money. "Now then, I'd jest like ter know how yer managed ter do that."

Those who had seen the performance could not understand it.

While the most of them remembered having heard two reports that blended into one, they could not understand how it was that the clock had been blown to pieces in that manner.

If they had known that concealed in the piece of candle was a small dynamite stick they would have understood all about it.

But they did not, nor did Hop mean to let them know it. But such was the case.

It was not the shot Hop had fired that did the damage, for there was nothing in his weapon but powder.

When he saw the fizz of the fuse he fired, and though he did not hit it exactly, it was quite sufficient to make them believe that his shot had done the business.

The man who was employed by the boss to clean up and help with the work in the saloon got a shovel and broom and swept up the remains of the clock.

When this had been done Hop pulled a big brass watch from one of his pockets and laid it on the bar.

"Lat um velly nicee watch," he said, nodding to the proprietor. "Me puttee um watchee up where um clock was, and len Young Wild West allee samee shootee it. He champion deadshot, so be, and he showee you whattee he do."

This was a little unexpected to our hero, but since the Chinaman had proposed it he was ready to give an exhibition of shooting.

Of course the desperadoes were all anxious to see an exhibition of that sort, for by this time they had all heard about the Champion Deadshot of the West.

Most of them thought that the Chinaman had made a wonderful shot when he destroyed the clock and caused the piece of candle to entirely disappear.

Hop took pains to show them that the watch was ticking, and then he lost no time in stepping over to the corner, where the clock had been resting upon the shelf.

Then he quickly slipped a piece of string through the ring of the timepiece, and letting it hang a few inches from his fingers, he called out:

"Allee light, Misler Wild; me ready."

CHAPTER IV.

HOP GIVES THE DESPERADOES ANOTHER SURPRISE.

Young Wild West knew exactly what the clever Chinaman wanted him to do.

It was Hop's desire that he should shoot the watch while he held it suspended by the string.

Coolly walking to a spot from which he might shoot without running the chances of injuring anyone in the room, the young deadshot drew one of his revolvers.

Hop had raised his hand above his head now, and with his left hand he was steadyng the watch so it might not swing.

"That's all right," said Wild, as he gave a nod. "Just light a match, Hop."

The Chinaman looked a little surprised, but lost no time in doing as he was told.

"Now hold it so I can see that string. I reckon I'll clip that in two first. If you are quick enough you can catch the watch before it hits the floor."

"Allee light, Misler Wild," the Celestial answered, quickly understanding what was meant.

Then he turned aside to the boy and held the watch so it hung downward, while the flame of the match was directly behind the string to which it was attached.

Our hero could see it plainly now, and up went his revolver.

Then down it came on a line with the slender string that hung suspended from the Chinaman's fingers.

Crack!

The sharp report rang out and the watch dropped toward the floor.

But so quick was Hop that he caught it before it struck.

Then he bowed to the lookers-on, just as though it was he who had performed a very wonderful feat, and then proceeded to show the watch to everybody in order that they might see that it was still ticking.

"Lat velly goodee watchee, so be," he declared. "Me leetee Young Wild West shootee um hole through, and len me fixee velly muchee quickee. Evelybody watchee!"

Back he went to the corner, and this time he held a short fuse and string in his fingers and let the watch hang but a few inches below.

He did not light a match this time, for there was a flaming oil lamp hanging near at hand and Wild could see the shining object very well.

Everyone else could see it, too, and there was no one there who thought it was a different watch from the one the Chinaman had showed them.

But it was, just the same.

What Hop was now holding up was an old battered time-piece that was so much out of order that it could not possibly tick.

He had cleverly changed it for the other.

"Are you ready, Hop?" Wild called out, as he threw up his gun.

"Me allee samee ready, Misler Wild," came the reply.

Crack!

This time the watch went up against the side of the building heavily and then dropped to the floor.

Hop quickly picked it up and went around the room from one to another, showing them that the bullet had gone almost entirely through the watch, bending the little wheels and pinions into all sorts of shapes.

Some of these were sticking out so they could be seen.

"Ther boy put the finishin' touches to that ticker," observed the saloonkeeper. "If I heard aright, yer said yer was goin' ter fix it an' make it go ag'in, heathen."

"Lat light," and Hop nodded and smiled at him. "Me fixee velly muchee quickee."

"Well, I'd jest like ter see that done."

Hop declared the same thing, and after everyone had seen that the watch was a hopeless wreck they crowded around the Chinaman, who now took his seat at one of the tables near the center of the room.

Of course the remarkable shooting our hero had done was quite enough to make them understand that he was entitled to be called the Champion Deadshot of the West.

But they almost forgot that part of it in their eagerness to see what the Chinaman was going to do.

It was only natural that they should be interested in such a thing, for the very fact that a watch that was running and keeping time should be shot at seemed rather surprising to them.

But the Chinaman declared that he was going to fix it very quickly, and they wanted to see him do it.

Hop placed the wrecked watch near the center of the table, and then called for a bottle of whisky.

The boss thought nothing strange of this, so he quickly obliged him.

After seeing that the bottle was nearly full, Hop poured a few drops upon the watch.

Then he calmly put the bottle under his coat and let it drop into one of the pockets that were there.

"Hold on!" spoke up the saloonkeeper, "I reckon you've made a little mistake. That bottle goes back behind my bar, unless you want ter pay for it."

"Lat so!" exclaimed the Chinaman, as though he really had made a mistake. "Me forgittee. Me allee samee tlinkee lat my tanglefoot."

Then he calmly pulled a bottle from under his coat and passed it over to the boss.

The man did not take the trouble to examine it, since he surely thought it was the one he had brought from behind the bar.

He put it back upon the shelf and then returned to watch the Chinaman fix the watch.

Hop now drew the yellow silk handkerchief he always used to help him with his magic tricks from one of his pockets, and shaking it out to show all hands that there was nothing in it, he said:

"Now len, you watchee. Me fixee um watchee velly quickee, so be. Me velly gheat magician."

Then he took the broken watch from the table and proceeded to wrap it up in the handkerchief.

When he had done this he looked around at the faces before him, and picking out no less a personage than Jack Gore, the Boss Desperado of Diamond Dive, he nodded and said:

"You holdee um watchee."

"I don't want nothin' to do with it," was the surly re-

joinder, though the ruffian was quite as much interested as any of the rest at what was going on.

"Allee light. Maybe somebody else allee samee holdee."

"I will," spoke up the proprietor of the saloon. "I'll do anything to help yer along in this wonderful trick of yours. You're goin' ter fix that watch so it goes ag'in, an' you're goin' ter do it by magic, so yer say."

"Lat light. You guesee velly muchee light um first timee."

Then the man took the watch and after weighing it carefully in his hand, said:

"She's in ther handkerchief, all right, boys. Now then, let's see him do what he said he would."

Hop motioned him to come closer to the table, which he did, and then looking at him he said:

"You holdee velly muchee caleful; no soozee too hardee; no lettee dlop."

"Oh, I'll be careful about it," was the reply. "Go ahead."

Hop now arose and began making some mysterious motions, while he looked at the handkerchief that was wrapped around the watch and in the hand of the saloonkeeper.

Then he proceeded to mutter something in his own language, and looked at the ceiling.

This done, he suddenly sat down and brought both hands down upon the table hard.

"Allee light!" he exclaimed. "Me fixee um watchee. You lookee, boss."

It was quite evident that the saloonkeeper did not believe that the watch had been fixed, but he lost no time in unwrapping the handkerchief from it.

As he brought it to view his eyes opened and then he gave a gasp of astonishment.

Sure enough, there was the watch perfectly intact. He looked at it for a moment, and then cautiously placed it to his ear.

It was ticking, all right.

There was no mistake but that it was going.

"Boys, he sartinly fixed it," he said, solemnly, as he looked around at the crowd. "That's about ther greatest thing I ever seen done."

"Me velly smartee Chinee," spoke up Hop, just as though that would explain it all. "Me do almost anyting, so be. If me tellee you lis shanty allee samee falleed down in pieces, you bettee lat it will do it. Maybe when me allee samee gittee plenty full me makee um shanty go allee pieces."

"Hold on!" cried the owner. "I don't know whether yer could do that or not, but just don't try it, please. I don't want my shanty to be wrecked. Don't do that, heathen."

"Allee light. Me no do it, so be. Me only havee lillee joke. But if me wantee do, me makee go pieces velly muchee quickee."

"Well, I ain't sayin' yer can't, but I would rather yer wouldn't do it."

"Allee light. Now eveybody lookee at um watchee."

Everyone wanted to see it, as might be supposed, and in a few minutes the curiosity of all had been gratified.

"Now len," said Hop, as he took back the watch and looked at the owner of the establishment, "you wantee buy um watchee?"

"I'll give yer ten dollars for it," was the quick reply.

Hop shook his head.

"Lat watchee allee samee worth more lan ten dollars, so be," he declared. "Me tellee you whattee me do."

"Well, what will yer do?"

The proprietor of the saloon evidently was willing to give a little more than what he had offered.

"A lille while ago me allee samee givee you fifty dollee to pay for um clock me bleak; now len, me puttee up um watchee and you puttee up um fifty dollee. Len we chukee dice to see who takee. Me allee samee sport, so be."

"By ginger, I'm with yer, heathen! I reckon I'm somewhat of a sport, too."

"Allee light. Fetchee um dice."

As the man turned to get the dice Hop's hand slipped into one of his pockets, and when it came out, unobserved by anyone there, it contained two sets of dice.

One ~~set~~ was larger than the other, and they were trick dice, since the spots upon them were only fives and sixes.

The dice belonging to the establishment and the cup containing them soon appeared on the table.

Hop rolled them out in an offhanded way, and quickly saw that the smallest set he had concealed in his hand would about match them.

That was all he wanted.

The three larger ones were quickly dropped back in his pocket.

"How you chukee?" he asked, smiling at the boss.

"One chuck an' count ther spots," was the reply.

"Allee light; you go ahead and chukee."

"Well, I ain't afraid to lead off," and the saloonkeeper quickly placed the dice in the cup and gave them a good shake.

Then he rolled them out upon the bar.

"Fourteen!" he exclaimed, jubilantly. "I reckon you have got to do some tall throwin' to beat that, heathen."

"Lat allee light," was the bland reply. "Me allee samee velly smartee Chinee. Me bettee you fifty dollee more lat me beatee you thlow."

The proprietor of the Diamond Dive saloon was certainly too much of a sport to resist the temptation.

"All right," said he, quickly producing the money. "I'll take yer. Then after you have chucked I'll bet yer fifty dollars ten times that yer don't beat twelve each time yer throw. That's somethin' better than fourteen, heathen."

"Allee light. Waitee till me chukee lis timee."

Hop coolly gathered up the dice, but took pains to drop the three trick ones into the cup.

He shook them and rattled them about for a second or two, and then coolly rolled them out upon the table.

"Wow!" exclaimed one of the lookers-on. "Seventeen, by ginger!"

Sure enough, the clever Chinee had rolled out two sixes and a five.

But there was nothing really surprising about it, since it really had to be sixes or fives to come up.

"Me winee!" cried Hop, as he scooped in the money and watch and quickly caused them to disappear under his coat.

Wild knew very well how it was that the Chinaman had won, and not wishing to see him go ahead and fleece the owner of the saloon, he called out:

"Hop, I reckon you had better not throw dice any more."

You can't do it squarely, so there is no use in winning the man's money. He has not the ghost of a show with you."

"Why, how is that, Young Wild West?" the boss asked, looking at the boy in surprise.

"Well, you just saw how he made out that he fixed the watch, didn't you?" Wild answered.

"Yes, I reckon I did."

"Well, you must know that it was impossible to fix that watch after I had put a bullet in it."

"It sartinly looked that way; but he fixed it, though."

"You ought to know better than that. Hasn't it occurred to you that probably it was another watch that I shot at, and that he changed them by aid of his cleverness?"

"Well, it might have been that way."

"Well, if he could do that, why couldn't he beat you throwing dice? He's a sleight-of-hand performer. If you throw dice with him he will win all the money you have got. That is why I told him not to throw any more. I hope you understand now?"

"I reckon I do," and the saloonkeeper gave a nod. "Much obliged to yer. I won't chuck with him. I reckon I don't want ter stack my money up ag'in no magician."

"Go ahead an' chuck with him, Bill," spoke up Jack Gore. "We'll watch him, an' if we see him cheatin', someone will put a hole through him."

"He won't get a hole put through him, then," said Wild, coolly, as he nodded to the villain. "None of you would be able to catch him cheating, I think. But if it happened that you did he wouldn't get a hole put through him, anyhow; not since I have told you he was a sleight-of-hand performer."

The Boss Desperado muttered something and stepped back.

It was evident that he was very bitter against the young deadshot and his friends, but his fear held him in.

"I'm satisfied to let things go as they are," declared the proprietor. "I'm only fifty dollars out, anyhow, 'cause that clock wasn't worth fifty cents."

Then he laughed, just as though it was a joke when he declared that the clock was the only one in the mining camp.

"Maybe ther heathen might be able to fix ther clock—he's so smart," suggested one of the desperadoes, with something like a sneer.

"You fetchee allee pieces here and puttee on um bar, and me fixee velly muchee quickee," spoke up Hop. "Me mustee havee allee um pieces, so be."

"I reckon it would be mighty hard work to find 'em all," spoke up the man who had cleaned up the wreck of the clock and thrown everything outside. "No one could sartinly find 'em to-night, anyhow."

The subject was not pressed further, so Hop now calmly drew the big revolver from under his coat.

"Lis um velly nicee gun, so be," he declared, as he looked at it, and patted it fondly. "Makee velly muchee shootee. Me killee seventeen Injuns in one shootee, so be, two weeks ago. Me velly smartee Chinee."

Five of the chambers were still loaded, and in three of them was a quantity of the powder that caused colored fire when ignited.

One was red, one green and the other blue.

Hop knew just where they were, of course, and lifting the hammer he turned the cylinder so when he fired it off the red fire would shoot from the muzzle of the weapon.

Having done this, he arose from the table and walked over to the shelf upon which the clock had rested.

Making out that he was feeling for something there, he placed a handful of gunpowder upon the shelf.

Then he went back to the table again.

The spectators were looking from the shelf to the Chinaman now, wondering what was going to happen next.

Hop was not long in drawing a pack of cards from his pocket, and then quickly selecting the ace of clubs from it, he went back to the shelf and set it up directly behind the little heap of gunpowder.

"Now len," said he, "me showee you how me hit um ace of clubs, so be. Evelybody watchee!"

He was not more than ten feet from the card as he raised his weapon.

Hop was anything but a good shot, but this time he was very careful to take a straight aim, for he wanted to give the desperadoes another surprise.

Bang!

As the report sounded a stream of red fire shot from the muzzle of the weapon, straight to the shelf.

Of course it ignited the powder and there was a muffled explosion that shook the shanty.

For the second time that night the barroom was filled with smoke and the men were hustling to get out of it.

"Hip hi!" yelled the Chinaman. "Nobody be affaid. Me hittee um ace of clubs, allee light."

Cheyenne Charlie broke into a roar of laughter, for the antics of the Chinaman certainly appealed to him.

But his laugh was cut short, however, for two reports rang out quickly from the doorway and he felt his hat move on his head.

"Ther galoots is after us, Wild!" he exclaimed as he dropped to the floor.

Our hero quickly followed his example, and then two more shots sounded.

CHAPTER V.

THE DESPERADOES ARE SUBDUED.

Young Wild West knew that the desperadoes had accepted the chance the smoke offered them to get in some of their fine work.

As he got close to the floor he could see much better than he could before, since the smoke was slowly rising.

Crack!

Another shot was fired from the doorway, and then our hero saw the lower extremities of a man.

The flash had shown through the smoke, and it was easy for him to guess that the man he could see a portion of had fired it.

Crack!

It was Wild who fired this time, and as the report rang out a yell of pain sounded and the villain in the doorway went rolling upon the ground.

Wild knew very well that he would not bother them any more, even though he had not been able to see exactly where he was shooting.

But he made a pretty good guess of it, and he was satisfied that the bullet found a spot that was close to the heart of the desperado.

"Come on, Charlie!" he said, in a whisper. "We'll rush right out among them. It is our only chance. Maybe we will get hit, and maybe we won't. But the fight is on now, and we must shoot down every man who opposes us."

"Right yer are, Wild," came the quick reply.

Then they both crept forward quickly on their hands and knees, and reaching the door bounded outside into the darkness.

Someone had taken the precaution to put out the light that had been burning outside, so it was difficult to observe the features of the crowd that was gathered around.

But their outlines showed plainly enough, and as our two friends reached one of the big trees that shaded the shanty saloon and got partly behind it, Young Wild West called out sharply:

"Go ahead with your game, you sneaking coyotes. I reckon you have not done any damage yet, so keep on trying."

Then there was a short silence.

It was suddenly broken, however, by the crack of a revolver.

The bullet chipped a piece of bark from the tree, and Wild felt a piece of it strike his face.

But he had been watching closely, and almost before the echo of the report died out he fired directly for where the flash came from.

A howl of pain sounded, and then he knew he had not missed.

"Keep it up!" he shouted. "This is just the sort of work we take delight in. Let yourselves go, desperadoes. When we get through with you Diamond Dive will be in need of a new population. Every man who fires a shot is going to drop. Mark my words for that."

Again there was a silence, and this time a pin could have been heard if dropped upon the ground anywhere near at hand.

"You have got just two minutes to start up your game again," the young deadshot called out, in his cool and easy way. "Then if you don't fire, we will. You hear what I say, you sneaking coyotes!"

Wild was now directly behind the tree, and Charlie was crouching close behind him.

They were pretty well protected, since the tree was quite a large one.

If it had not been for it they would certainly have been placed in a very bad position, since they would have to seek shelter behind the shanty, and in that case the villains would have been able to approach them from both ways.

The fact was that the desperadoes feared Young Wild West, anyhow, and that was quite sufficient to make them go at it in a careful way.

The longer they waited the more uneasy they became, and finally one of them called out:

"We'll call it off, Young Wild West! We ain't goin' ter shoot any more. I didn't shoot, anyhow; but I've got somethin' ter say about it."

Our two friends recognized the voice of Jack Gore, and since he was the Boss of the Desperadoes, he was no doubt speaking with authority.

"All right; just as you like. I want you to understand that we are ready to fight it out. If you mean to quit, just walk into the whisky-mill again. Hurry up about it."

That settled it, for the time being, anyhow.

The villains lost no time in entering the barroom, which was now quite free of smoke.

Wild and Charlie did not know how Hop had fared.

It might have been that one of the bullets fired by the villains had dropped him.

But since they had not heard anything from him, they felt that such was not the case.

Unless he had been killed instantly they would surely have heard a cry.

Someone lighted a lamp in the building, and then our friends were able to see the men as they marched in.

Faili last one entered, and they were about to follow, a footstep sounded behind them.

"Me here, Misler Wild."

It was Hop Wah who spoke.

He spoke just in time, too, for Charlie had drawn his revolver on a line with him, and two seconds more would have meant certain death for the Chinaman.

"Oh, you're all right, eh, Hop?" said Wild, in a low tone of voice.

"Yes, me allee light, Misler Wild," was the reply. "Me allee samee lun outtee um back door, so be."

"Well, then, we are all safe and sound. But for a minute it seemed as though we were going to get it. But never mind. Come on. We'll go in there and find out how the desperadoes feel after the little shooting match."

To enter the place again might have seemed extremely foolhardy.

But it was not so with Young Wild West and Cheyenne Charlie.

They both knew that in order to hold the advantage they had gained they must show the rascally crowd that they were not the least bit afraid of them.

As they stepped inside they took note of the fact that not a man had a weapon in his hand, though all seemed to be rather uneasy.

The man Wild had shot from the floor lay close to the doorway, and there was no doubt but that he was dead.

But they paid no attention to him and coolly walked to the bar.

Not until they had reached the end of it, and had backed against the wall, did they stop.

Hop remained standing in front of Wild and Charlie, however, he leaning upon the bar, just as though nothing had happened at all.

"Well, gentlemen, how do you feel after the excitement?" our hero asked, in his cool and easy way. "It seems that our clever Chinaman gave you the very chance you were looking for. He filled the place full of smoke, and then some of you undertook to drop us. But you made a little mistake. Instead of us being killed you lost two men. How does it strike you, anyhow?"

There was no reply to this.

Then Wild's sharp eyes caught sight of Jack Gore.

He was well in the background and stood leaning against the wall of the building.

"Come out here, Mr. Gore," the boy said, as a smile played about his lips. "You're the leader of this gang,

so you and I may as well settle this thing right here. The fact is that we want to stay here until to-morrow, some time. You don't want us to stay, it seems. Now then, suppose we fight it out right here and settle the question. If you get the best of me your gang can go ahead and clean out my friends. If I get the best of you we are to stay, and not to be interfered with by anyone in the camp. That's a fair proposition, isn't it?"

"It sounds all right," spoke up the villain called Tom. "But since you know very well that you kin lick Jack in a fist fight, it will be all your own way."

"Well, it need not be a fist fight, then," said Wild, coolly. "I'll let the big fool name any way he wants to fight. It matters not to me whether it is with bowie knives, guns or clubs—anything at all will do."

Nearly every man in the room turned his gaze upon the leader of the desperadoes.

His face was very pale, though the marks of the blows Wild had given him when they met at the edge of the desert strip were plainly visible.

"Speak up, Jack Gore," went on the boy, as he took a step toward the center of the room. "I know you are all villains, but there must be the least bit of principle about some of you. I have made a fair proposition; it is for you to accept it or decline it. What is it going to be?"

"I ain't goin' ter fight no duel, not when I don't have ter," came the reply.

"Well, then, what are you going to do? Are you going to keep up the fight? If you are we will start right in now and see how many of you we can drop. Anything at all will suit us."

Such bold talk as this, especially after what had happened, was quite enough to increase the fear and uneasiness that was so pronounced among the crowd of villains.

"Well, I'll tell you what I'll do," said Gore, after a pause. "We'll call it off for to-night. To-morrow mornin' we'll settle ther difference that's come between us, Young Wild West."

"All right. You shall have your own way about it. What time in the morning shall we meet?"

"Oh, I don't suppose it makes much difference about what time. But I'll be around here about seven o'clock, I reckon."

"Very well; that suits me. I will bid you all good-night."

Then the boy started for the door, just as though there was no such thing as danger in the place.

Hop followed him, and then Cheyenne Charlie, a revolver in either hand, backed after them.

The scout was not going to trust them, and the least move that was made to draw a weapon by any of them would have met sure death from him.

But the men remained silent, and as the three got outside they started at a quick walk for the camp.

"Well, Charlie, it was pretty lively there for a little while," observed our hero, as he looked over his shoulder in the direction of the shanty saloon.

"It sartinly was, Wild," the scout replied. "If it hadn't been for your coolness, it would have been all up with us. But you always act that way, an' that's what makes me do ther right thing, I s'pose. I sartinly couldn't have got out of that place if I'd been there alone."

"Well, I don't know about that, Charlie. You're pretty good at that sort of thing, you know."

"Yes, I'm putty good when I've got you to lead ther way. But this thing ain't over yet, Wild. There'll be somewhat of a lively time in Diamond Dive to-morrow mornin'."

"Well, I hardly think so," and the young deadshot shook his head. "The majority of the desperadoes will come to the conclusion, after they have slept over it, that they had better let us alone, I think. Of course Jack Gore will do his level best to get square with me. That is certain."

"Well, ther best thing ter do with him is to put a bullet through his heart at ther very first move he makes, Wild."

"Yes, I suppose that's right, but I think it will be better to let him live. The more cowardly he shows himself the less confidence his followers will have in him. When they find their leader shows the white feather it is only natural they will begin to think it about time to stop their high-handed work. But never mind. We will talk it over after we get to the camp, and then when morning comes we will know just about what to do."

The camp was only a short distance away now, and as they reached it they found Jim standing there, revolver in hand, while the girls were sitting near the tent, each with a rifle.

"Hello!" exclaimed the young deadshot, and then he gave a laugh. "Did you think they were after us?"

"Yes, Wild," Arietta answered, quickly. "We heard the shooting over there, and we have been waiting in anxiety ever since. We thought you might have got in a tight place, and that it was necessary for you to run to the camp here."

"Well, we were in a very tight place, Et," retorted her young lover. "But I reckon we got out of it all right, didn't we, Charlie?"

"We sartinly did," was the reply. "We went through with bells on, an' no mistake."

Wild related all that had happened in the shanty saloon.

There was much to laugh about, but the serious part of it caused the girls to look very grave.

"I don't blame you for the way you acted, Wild," Arietta declared. "Since we were bold enough to come to this place, after reading the sign, it was necessary for you to carry it through. But I fear we shall have no end of trouble before we leave Diamond Dive."

"Well, let it come," replied the boy, his eyes flashing. "Every man in this place states himself to be a desperado. That means that there is no show for an honest man here. Such places should be wiped off the map. But we may be able to get them without doing that. If the desperadoes are taught a good lesson they might tame down a whole lot. Then with a little new blood in the place it ought to boom up in a different fashion. I would just like to see a few strangers strike here to-morrow. I mean good, honest men. The desperadoes would certainly start in to pick at them right away, and then we would have good cause to tackle them and give them what they deserve."

"That's right, Wild," the scout spoke up, nodding his head approvingly. "If about a dozen of 'em passes in their chips it will be easy to make ther rest understand that they've got to act a different way from what they have been

doin'. It ain't likely that they're all so very bad, not when it comes right down to ther point."

"I'm surprised to hear you talking that way, Charlie," his wife spoke up, quickly. "You always seem to be of the opinion that any man who goes against you is no good."

"Well, I don't think any of 'em is much good, for that matter," Charlie answered. "But there may be some good in a few of 'em, yer know. What they want is a few lessons in what they oughter do."

"Well, that's right. You're getting to be quite an observer of human nature."

Charlie said no more.

The fact that the camp was located in a spot that could not be very well approached by anyone without the knowledge of those who were watching made them feel quite at their ease.

Though it was still rather early in the evening ~~the~~ ^{led the} decided that it would be a good idea for all hands to go to sleep, except Charlie and Hop, who were to do guard duty until midnight.

He no sooner proposed this than they proceeded to do so.

No light was left burning at the camp, and it was not long before all was as still as the grave in that vicinity, though an occasional shout and burst of laughter could be heard from the saloon in the distance.

Though a good watch was kept all night, it had not proved to be necessary, for never once did any of the desperadoes show up anywhere near the little camp.

Just as the sun was rising all hands were up and stirring.

Young Wild West and his partners felt that the real trouble with the desperadoes was soon coming, so they prepared themselves to meet it.

While they helped Hop in looking after the horses ~~the~~ ^{set} about to cook the morning meal.

As the sun got a little higher above the rugged chain of mountains to the east its rays fell full upon the little camp.

"This is certainly a nice morning," said Arietta, turning to Anna and Eloise. "Everything is so quiet, too. It hardly seems possible that we are at a mining camp that is made up entirely of desperadoes."

"That's all right, Et," Wild spoke up, as he came along in time to hear what she said. "Maybe there won't be so many of them when we get through with them."

CHAPTER VI.

THE ARRIVAL OF THE PEDDLERS.

After Young Wild West and Cheyenne Charlie left the saloon, followed by the Chinaman, Jack Gore walked over to the door and looked outside.

He watched them until they were out of sight, and then he walked up to the bar, and bringing his fist down heavily upon it, exclaimed:

"Set 'em up for all hands, Bully John. It's about time I stood treat. I s'pose yer all think I'm a putty cowardly sort of galoot, but I ain't. I want ter live about as much as anyone."

"Sartin, Jack," the fellow called Tom hastened to say. "We knows that. We've all been in a streak of hard luck

it seems. We ain't in ther habit of dealin' with sich as Young Wild West."

"I guess yer ain't, boys," the proprietor retorted, as he searched about to find glasses enough to supply all hands. "He's ther coolest lad I ever set eyes on. No wonder he's got ther name of bein' a regular terror to evildoers. Why, he kin scare lots of folks by lookin' at 'em, it seems ter me."

"Well, he ain't scared me yet, anyhow," the Boss Desperado declared. "Ther reason I acted ther way I did was 'cause I knowed he had ther best of me. It wasn't 'cause I was afraid of him. When a man knows a thing, he knows it!"

"That's right," and Bully John nodded.

Failing to find enough glasses to supply the demand he told those close to the bar to fill up and drink, so the others might be supplied.

This they did, and when the last man had received what was coming to him Jack Gore produced the buckskin bag and took from it a small handful of gold dust.

"Just weigh that out, John," he said. "I ain't got no money, but I've got plenty of this here stuff."

"All right, Jack," was the reply, and the saloonkeeper eagerly took the dust from him.

He had a little scales behind the bar, and he soon weighed up the pile.

"I'll allow yer jest twenty dollars for that, Jack," he said, turning to the villain.

"All right; give me my change in money, will yer?"

"Sartinly."

No doubt the rascally proprietor had made four or five dollars on the deal, so he was bound to be satisfied.

There was not a great deal of change coming, but Gore took it and dropped it in his pocket.

"Now then, boys," said he, addressing no one in particular, and looking at the floor, "I want yer to all understand that Young Wild West ain't to leave this camp alive. I hope yer hear what I say."

Several of them took pains to tell him that they did, and then he went on:

"There's three gals with Young Wild West an' his pards, as well as a couple of Chinamen. We ain't got nothin' in ther way of women or gals in Diamond Dive, so we'd better not until 'em three here. It seems that we ain't got a against 'em, either, so we'll keep ther two heathens, too. But Young Wild West an' his pards has got to shuffle off this mortal coil, as they say in ther almanac, or some other book—I don't know what it is."

"Shuffle off this mortal coil is good," nodded Tom, a grin showing on his face. "I've heard of that myself. But yer might jest as well say die, an' be done with it, Jack."

"Well, there ain't nothin' like havin' a flow of ther American language at your command, yer know, Tom," and the Boss Desperado of Diamond Dive smiled just enough to make his swollen face look more hideous than ever. "Yer see, I've got a little more eddication than you. I went to school nigh on ter five months when I lived back in Kansas. If I'd gone about three months more I reckon I'd have knowed as much as the teacher."

"Why didn't yer go?" queried one of the miners.

"Well, ther measles broke out jest about that time, an' I was took down with it. Then jest as I was gittin' over it

nicely my old man took ther notion ter go further West, so that knocked all my schoolin' into a cocked hat. We come on West, an' when we located it was in a putty wild part of ther Rockies, where there wasn't a school within a hundred miles. Neither my old man nor my mother could read, so I studied what I could from an almanac an' ther piece of an old book we had in our possession, an' that's how I got my eddication. I'm what yer call a self-made man."

The majority of the men present looked at him with a sort of admiration.

While there was no doubt that he knew quite as much as any of them, this did not go for much.

But they were all willing to allow that he was the best educated one of the lot, even to the boss of the shanty, who could count faster than anyone present, especially when it came to figuring up what a round of drinks cost.

Having expressed himself, Jack Gore now walked over to the nearest table and sat down.

"Now then," he observed, as he made a sweeping glance about the room, "I'm jest in ther humor to play poker. Don't all speak to once, 'cause everybody can't play in one game, yer know. I want ter do somethin' ter sorter ease my mind a bit. I promised to meet Young Wild West at seven o'clock to-morrow mornin'. Afore that time comes around I want some of yer to have a hole dug in ther burying ground under ther cliff. We'll have ther ground all ready for Young Wild West an' his pards. Do you understand that, boys?"

An affirmative answer came from several of them, so the leader of the desperadoes nodded and looked pleased.

Bully John quickly provided him with a pack of cards, and then it was not long before he selected four of the men, who were probably closer to him than any of the rest, to join in the game.

Then other tables were soon occupied, and half an hour after our friends had returned to their camp things were going along nicely at the saloon, and the proprietor was steadily taking in gold dust and cash as well.

Business kept up until well toward morning, and then Jack Gore proved to be one of the last to leave the place.

His shanty was not far distant.

He occupied it with Tom, who was really his right bower, and the closest of all the friends he had in the camp.

We might say right here that not all the men who called themselves desperadoes were really of that stamp.

At least a dozen of them were willing to assume that they were, however, since by doing so they were permitted to remain there and proceed with their work, thus accumulating the gold dust.

These men, it might be said, were getting along much better in the world than the others, even though they spent considerable of what they earned.

They were saving some of what they took from the earth, while the others simply were satisfied to get what they needed to buy liquor and gamble with.

As soon as Bully John closed up his place he sought his room and went to sleep.

He knew very well that the man employed by him would have it open again as soon as it got daylight, so he had nothing to worry him.

Shortly after daylight the man was right on hand, and as he swung the front door open and looked out the first thing that caught his eye was a big wagon looming up at the foot of the slope as it struck the diamond-shaped place.

Two mules were hitched to the wagon, and upon the seat were two men.

The bartender, as we may as well call him, looked very much surprised.

It was the first time he had ever seen a new arrival showing up that early in the morning.

He rubbed his eyes and looked again.

There was no mistake about it.

Two mules and a big wagon were certainly approaching, while two men were sitting upon the seat of the wagon.

"Well, by gosh!" he exclaimed. "I wonder where that outfit come from so early in the mornin'? Most likely they've been travelin' all night. Maybe they missed seein' the sign that Jack Gore put up over on the Tombstone trail."

There was no one else stirring in the mining camp, as far as he could see, so he stood in the doorway and waited until the outfit arrived.

"Good mornin', strangers!" he called out, as the mules came to a halt. "You must have started mighty early to git here."

"We did," answered the man who was driving, as he threw down the reins. "But we didn't have very far ter come, yer know. We put up for the night jest about half a mile from here, never knowing that we was so close to a town. This morning I happened to get up mighty early, an' as I walked up to the top of a cliff an' took a look around I seen the shanties down here. Then I woke my partner an' we started over here without waitin' to git breakfast. What place is this, anyhow?"

"If yer read the sign on this shanty you'll find out mighty quick what the name of the place is," retorted the bartender, as he jerked his thumb in the direction of the sign above his head.

"Oh!" said the other traveler. "Diamond Dive, eh?"

"Oh, yer kin read, eh?" and the bartender looked a bit surprised. "Well, you have got it right, stranger. This is Diamond Dive. Yer didn't know it afore, eh?"

"Nope!" and both men shook their heads.

"Well, it's a mighty fine place, too, as you'll find out when the gang gits around."

"That's the kind of a place we want, ain't it, pardner," observed the driver, as he smiled.

"You bet," was the reply. "We've got goods ter sell, we have. What we want is to strike people that will buy 'em. If this is a fine place there must be fine people in it, an' fine people is generally pretty liberal about buyin' the sort of goods we've got ter sell."

"Peddlers, eh?" and the bartender looked a little curiously at the wagon.

"Yep!" the driver answered. "We've got about everything that a man needs, an' our prices is so low that we're bound to sell the minute we show the goods."

"But we'll buy somethin' afore we try to do any sellin'," spoke up the other man. "How about breakfast, boss?"

"You kin be 'commodated, if you kin wait about an hour," the bartender retorted.

"All right, that will do. We've got grub of our own,

but it sorter seems a little nice to set down to a table once in a while. We'll wait. Come on in, Doc," and he turned to his companion; "I reckon we kin git liquor without waitin', all right."

"Oh, yes, we've got plenty of that," and the bartender turned and walked into the place.

Leaving the team standing before the shanty the two men followed him, and the next minute they were leaning over the bar.

They had no trouble in getting what they wanted, and when they had paid for it they proceeded to question the bartender as to the population of the place, and what sort of men there were living there.

He gave them all the information he thought was necessary, and wound up by saying:

"You'll find the boys is all right, as long as you treat 'em right. Maybe they'll be a little rough when they first see yer, but that'll all pass away, if yer don't git mad."

"Well, I guess we kin manage them all right," declared the man called Doc, "won't we, Harry?"

"I sorter reckon we've been around minin' camps long enough to know how to git along with almost anybody," was the reply.

They soon went outside and unhitched the mules, and when they had led them a short distance away and turned them loose to get what they could to eat from the sparse growth of grass, they came back and busied themselves in the wagon for a while.

It was not long before they had quite a display at the rear of it, since the back had been lifted up and there was now what looked to be a regular booth, such as are to be found in many of the stores.

Clothing, hats, boots and shoes, cheap jewelry, combs, soap, and different articles such as might be sold in a place of that kind were displayed there.

The bartender walked out after a while, and when he saw the display a broad grin came over his face.

"You sartinly have got a fine outfit, strangers," he observed with a chuckle. "When the boys sees that they'll nigh about go wild. Jest wait."

He said the last in a rather peculiar way, and the two men looked at each other, as though they were suspicious that things might not turn out altogether to their liking when the "boys" saw their goods.

The bartender quickly assured them that they would do a rousing business, so they went into the saloon again.

It happened that Bully John had not slept very well, and hearing voices in the barroom he arose and soon came out.

He was in a rather bad humor, but when he found that two peddlers had arrived in the early morning he became interested, and when he saw the line of things they had to offer for sale to the miners of Diamond Dive he actually smiled.

Probably he was thinking how the desperadoes would clean out the wagon when they gathered there a little later.

Finding that the two strangers wanted breakfast he hurried up matters a little, and it was not long before they were escorted into the room that served as a dining-room and kitchen combined, and they were supplied with coffee and eatables.

Before they had finished the meal two of the desperadoes came along.

When they saw the wagon standing there, and the wonderful display, they were astonished.

Bully John quickly explained that he had two peddlers as his guests, and that they were there for the purpose of selling their stock in trade to the miners.

Then one of the villains turned to the other and said:

"We'd better go an' wake up Jack Gore."

"That's right," said the other. "Go right ahead an' do it. Git all ther boys around here. We'll have some fun with them peddlers."

Ten minutes later the two peddlers finished their breakfast and came outside.

They smiled when they saw that quite a crowd was col-
l^ling about the wagon.

The sun was now up, and the majority of those living in the camp were awake and about.

They kept on coming, one of the last being Jack Gore, the Boss Desperado.

When he got there he walked up to the display of goods and proceeded to make a selection.

He did not stop until he had taken samples of about everything there was in the wagon, and then turning to the two men, he said:

"How much do you want for that lot?"

The man called Doc quickly scanned the pile and retorted:

"Twenty-one dollars, boss."

As quick as a flash Jack Gore whipped out a revolver and leveling it at the man's heart, exclaimed:

"Call it one dollar, an' you'll be allowed to live. Hurry up, or you'll drop in your tracks."

"All right, make it a dollar, then," was the quick reply.

"That's ther way to talk, stranger."

Then the leader of the desperadoes looked at the crowd and exclaimed:

"Now, boys, step up an' help yourselves. Every man gits what he wants for a dollar. Ther first comes will be ther first served."

The villains set up a yell and made a rush for the wagon.

Knowing that they had struck a very hard crowd, the two peddlers said nothing, but with pale, anxious faces they watched the crowd fight for their stock in trade.

While the scramble was going on Bully John, who was standing in the doorway of the saloon, happened to look in the direction of the camp of our friends.

"Say, boys!" he called out, excitedly, "here comes Young Wild West an' his pards!"

three saw a crowd of men gathered about a wagon that was standing in front of Bully John's place.

"I wonder when that outfit got there, Wild?" the scout asked, as he looked at the vehicle in surprise.

"I don't know," was the reply. "It must have arrived during the night, or else very early this morning. Suppose we go over and see what's the matter?"

"Sartin."

Of course Jim Dart was willing to do this, so all three quickly came down from the rock, and after telling the girls where they were going, started off at a brisk walk.

They were just about half way to the spot when the desperadoes made an attack upon the wagon for the purpose of cleaning out the stock in trade of the two peddlers.

Wild saw what was up right away.

"The rascally galoots are cleaning out the wagon, boys," he said, quickly. "We had better hurry a little."

Then they started on a run.

Before they reached the scene, however, the miners quieted down a little.

Some of them took pains to get quite a little distance from the wagon and remained silent, while others went on throwing the things they had taken from the wagon about, though not in a very sprightly way.

Probably they were doing it just to make Young Wild West understand that they were not afraid of him, though the fact was that they were very much afraid.

"What's going on here?" Wild called out, in his cool and easy way. "It looks as though you have started up a picnic. Pretty early in the morning for anything like that, I should think."

"Want ter buy somethin', Young Wild West?" asked Jack Gore, putting on a very bold manner, and acting as though he was joking. "Here's two peddlers what struck Diamond Dive this mornin', an' they've got a whole lot of stuff to sell. Maybe there's something here that will jest suit yer."

"If you fellows keep at it much longer it won't suit anybody," was the quick retort. "Have you paid the peddlers yet?"

"Yes, that's jest what we've done. Every man pays a dollar an' takes what he wants. We've about cleaned out everything ther two had to sell. If you do any buyin', you'll have to do it from some of us."

Heedless of the fact that there were so many villains there who were ready to kill him, the dashing young deadshot pushed his way forward, followed closely by his two partners.

Neither of them had drawn a weapon, though they were ready to do so at an instant's notice.

They went on through the crowd of men to the back of the wagon, which had been lowered down to make a display of the goods the two peddlers offered for sale.

Clothing, boots, trinkets and everything else that had been in the stock were scattered over the ground, where those who had proved to be more timid than the rest had dropped them when they saw our hero and his partners coming.

It was easy for Wild to see who the peddlers were.

They were standing close to the wagon, and their faces were the picture of dismay.

Charlie and Jim followed him quickly, and then all

CHAPTER VII.

WILD STARTS TO REFORM THE CAMP.

Young Wild West and his friends had finished eating their breakfast and were just thinking about going over to the Diamond Dive Saloon, when a loud shout came from that direction.

"Hello!" exclaimed the young deadshot, as he quickly clambered upon a rock, so that he might get a view of the place. "I wonder what that means?"

Charlie and Jim followed him quickly, and then all

"So you sold out in a hurry, did you?" Wild asked, as he looked at them sharply.

"We ain't sold a blessed thing, young feller," the man called Doc answered quickly. "The men here jest made a raid on us, that's what they did. They ain't paid over a dollar."

"Well, I thought it was about that way," was the cool reply. "Maybe you don't know that these men are called the Desperadoes of Diamond Dive? They're a very bad lot—sometimes. Why, the majority of them even want to kill me. What do you think of that?"

As the boy said this he turned quickly and caught Jack Gore in the act of drawing a revolver.

As quick as a flash Wild's hand slid to his right side and one of his revolvers flashed in the morning sun.

Crack!

The report rang out clear and distinct, and with a yell of pain Jack Gore dropped his revolver and clapped his hand to his mouth:

"I reckon you weren't quite quick enough, you sneaking coyote," the boy said, coolly. "I scraped the back of your hand with the bullet, all-right. The next time I fire at you I'll put it through the center of your heart!"

Instead of the villain's friends making a move to take his part, they became very quiet, indeed.

Though the shot had certainly been a wonderful one, the boy's coolness had more to do with subduing the desperadoes than anything else.

The fact was that the villainous miners could not quite understand him.

The way he acted was certainly quite different from anyone they had ever met.

Such a thing as fear did not appear to be within him.

Seeing that he had them just where he wanted them, Wild dropped the revolver back into the holster.

"It might be that some of you galoots will take a chance shot at me pretty soon," he went on to say, in his cool and easy way. "Well, I'll tell you one thing. You want to look out how you try it."

There was no reply to this, so Wild turned again to the two peddlers.

He knew very well that Charlie and Jim were keeping a strict watch upon those who might prove dangerous.

"Strangers," said he, "I reckon you may as well start in and gather up your belongings. Maybe there are some here who will help you. I really believe there are a few in the crowd who are ashamed of what they have done. We will see about it."

Then he shot a quick glance over the crowd.

The result was just what he thought it would be.

One of the men came meekly forward and joined in helping Doc and Harry to gather up their merchandise.

He had scarcely started in when four others followed his example.

Then three more came.

"Ah!" exclaimed our hero, smiling. "I was not mistaken. There are a few here, who, if they had a good chance, might prove themselves to be decent sort of men. There are eight of them, so I see. But," and he again flashed a glance at the crowd, "maybe there are some more. How about it?"

He was not surprised to see three more men step from the ranks and join in helping the two peddlers.

"Any more?" he asked.

But it seemed that there were not.

The rest of the gang no doubt meant to stick to Jack Gore, their leader.

"That's putty good," spoke up Cheyenne Charlie, as he nodded toward those who had dared to go against their leader. "Maybe Diamond Dive ain't sich a bad place, after all."

"Oh, the place is all right," Jim Dart quickly answered. "There are some mighty bad men living here, that's all. But they will all be good by the time we leave, and don't make any mistake on that."

The merchandise was soon gathered up, and then some of those who had helped the peddlers insisted on straightening things out.

The result was that in ten minutes after the arrival of our hero and his partners the display at the rear of the wagon looked about the same as when the two men had opened up for business.

Of course a few things had been destroyed, but the loss was but nominal.

When he saw that everything was pretty well straightened out, Wild pulled out his watch.

It lacked but three minutes of seven.

"Well, Jack Gore," he said, looking at the man, who had bound a handkerchief about his wounded hand and was leaning against the shanty near the door, "you said you would be around here about seven o'clock, so we could settle the disagreement that came between us. I am here; so we may as well go ahead. What do you propose to do about it?"

"I ain't got nothin' to say, Young Wild West," came the reply, as the villain shook his head in a dogged way. "I've found out that I can't depend on them what I thought was goin' ter stick to me. You have got ther best of it jest now. I ain't fool enough to git out an' fight yer, 'cause I know yer can lick me. Yer see I ain't offered ter attempt that. That don't show that I'm a coward, though, not by any means."

"Well, it shows that you're a sneaking coward, and if you take that, you are certainly a coward. If I acted the way I feel at this minute I would take you by the throat and strangle the life out of you. But I won't. I happen to have the way of holding my temp out to you know. But you know what I told you a little while ago. The next time I take a shot at you it is going to be to kill. If I were one of the sort who believe in betting I would lay a wager of a thousand dollars right now that you would be a dead man before the sun sets to-night."

The words caused a thrill to go through the followers of the villain, and some of them twisted their feet about upon the ground uneasily.

There was a depth of meaning to what Young Wild West said, and there was scarcely a man there who did not believe that his words were coming true.

Even the face of Bully John, proprietor of the saloon, had turned pale, and somehow he could not take his eyes from the face of Young Wild West.

Finally he turned to Gore and said:

"Jack, I ain't in ther habit of givin' advice, but I will

say that if I was you I'd offer an apology to ther boy. You have seen, an' we've all seen that he's altogether too much for yer. There ain't no question but that he's right, speaking from a general standpoint. You an' ther rest of us here in Diamond Dive kin git along jest as well as we ever did, an' not interfere with Young Wild West an' his friends, either. Boys," and he turned his gaze upon the others, "you have heard what I've got to say. Come on in an' I'll stand treat for everybody."

A shout of approval went up from some of those who had assisted the peddlers to gather up their merchandise, but Jack Gore did not venture to say anything.

However, he was the first to enter the saloon.

Then the rest came in rather slowly, the last ones being those who had broken away from the leader.

"Come on in, strangers," said Wild, nodding to the two idlers. "The landlord is going to stand treat for everyone. That includes you fellows, of course. Nobody will interfere with your goods while you are inside."

"You're sartinly what I call ther most wonderful young feller I ever saw," declared Doc, as he unhesitatingly came forward. "What might your name be, anyhow?"

"Well, I go by the name of Young Wild West, just because I have no other to go by."

"Is that so? Well, I can't say as I ever heard of you afore, but I will say that I never met a man, much less a boy, that's anything like yer. You have got a way about you that's most amazin', ain't that right, Harry?"

"It sartinly are," his partner spoke up quickly. "I was tryin' ter think of some words to say that would express my feelin's. But I s'pose amazin' will do it, all right."

Then he nodded to our hero and added:

We're a whole lot obliged to yer, Young Wild West. I s'pose we would have been cleaned out of everything we had if you hadn't showed up jest as you did. But I don't think that all these men are so bad, after all. There's more mischief in them than there is badness. It struck them as bein' mighty funny to see us here tryin' ter sell our goods, I s'pose, an' they thought they would clean us up, jest to amuse themselves. But if they had known that there was nigh on ter five hundred dollars' worth of goods that they was destroyin', an' that we've got somethin' less than two hundred dollars in cash to our names, they wouldn't have done it."

"Well, I don't know about that, stranger," our hero ~~said~~, shaking his head. "I have an idea that there ~~was~~ ~~are~~ of them who would not have stopped until they had cleaned you out of all the cash you have got, too. But you can bet all you're worth that they won't do it now, for I am well satisfied that it won't be over an hour or two before the majority of the desperadoes, as they seem pleased to call themselves, will be on your side. Anyhow, I propose to stay here in Diamond Dive long enough to reform the camp. I may be considered fresh for making this assertion, but I don't care anything about that. It seems that I can't help trying to straighten out things when I find they are going crooked. It's a way I have, you know."

"There's thousands as would like ter do sich things, I'm putty sure," declared the man called Harry. "You're the only one I ever seen who could do it. So that man you shot is the leader of the crowd, is he?"

"Yes, he calls himself Jack Gore, the Boss Desperado of Diamond Dive. I'll bet he is even thinking at this minute of a way to kill me, too. But he won't do it. You heard what I told him a minute or so ago?"

"Yes, we heard it, Young Wild West."

"Well, I really hope it does not come true; but I am confident that it will. Jack Gore will certainly try to down me before the day is over, and when he does try it it will be the last thing he will ever do on earth."

They all went inside now, and Wild and his partners accepted a cigar apiece from the landlord, who had become so generous all at once.

CHAPTER VIII.

HOP AMAZES THE PEDDLERS.

Young Wild West was absolutely certain that there was not a man among the desperadoes who would have the nerve to openly attack him.

The fact was that the nail he had driven the night before was now clinched, and he knew it quite well.

Of course it would be necessary to keep a sharp watch on Jack Gore and some of the others, for there were no doubt those among them who would not hesitate to kill him or his partners the moment they thought they would be safe in doing it.

The thing to do now was to weed out the very bad ones from the rest.

It happened that it did not take long to do this, for shortly after drinking at the bar at the expense of Bully John, Jack Gore started for the door, saying as he did so: "Come on, boys."

As he passed out our hero counted just thirteen men as they followed him.

But that was all. The rest remained in the barroom of the saloon.

"You are beginning to see things a little clearer than you did last night," he said, nodding to those who had remained. "Well, I am certain you are not making a mistake."

"Hooray for Young Wild West!" cried one of those who had been first to assist the two peddlers in gathering up their merchandise.

He took off his hat and waved it over his head, and then a cheer went up, nearly every man in the room joining in, the proprietor included.

Our hero bowed to them and smiled, and then he made his way to the door.

He saw those who might be called the real desperadoes of Diamond Dive heading off to the left, and he waited until he saw them go into one of the shanties that was not far away from the saloon.

Then he came back and joined his partners.

It happened that one of those who had remained was the man called Tom, who was supposed to be Jack Gore's right bower.

As he found our hero looking at him, Tom promptly stepped over and put out his hand.

"Will yer shake with me, Young Wild West?" he said, humbly.

"Why, certainly," was the reply.

it was all right, so he walked boldly forward and paused near the wagon owned by the two peddlers.

Seeing him standing there, Doc and Harry promptly came out of the saloon.

"Want ter buy anything, heathen?" the former asked, showing that he was always ready for business.

"Whattee you gottee to sell?" inquired Hop, putting on a very innocent way.

"About everything that yer kin think of," Harry hastened to answer. "We'll show yer."

"Allee light. Me likee lookee."

The back of the wagon was soon let down, and then in a very short time the two peddlers were showing him their goods.

The man called Tom and two others had decided not to go to work until the afternoon, so they came out, grinning broadly, for they had seen enough of the Chinaman the night before to understand pretty well that he was full of fun.

Hop took up a pair of suspenders in a rather gingerly way.

"Whattee you callee lis?" he asked, as he held them before Harry's face.

"Suspenders," was the reply. "Ain't yer never seen sich things afore?"

Hop shook his head.

"Me no undelstandee," he declared.

Then he carefully rolled the suspenders into as small a bunch as he could get them, and taking his big yellow silk handkerchief from under his coat proceeded to wrap them in it.

Neither of the peddlers said anything to this, for they imagined that the Chinaman was going to purchase the suspenders.

Hop coolly laid the parcel on the tailboard of the wagon.

Then he proceeded to look for something else that was displayed.

The two peddlers were no doubt clever fellows, but they had failed to notice that while he was looking at their goods the Chinaman had taken something that did not belong to him, and this before he had picked up the pair of suspenders.

But that was due to his wonderful sleight of hand, of course.

"Whattee you callee lis?" the Celestial asked, as he picked up a leather pocketbook.

"Why, that's a pocketbook, or wallet," Doc answered, quickly. "Ain't yer never seen one of them things before?"

Hop shook his head in the negative.

"Velly stlange," he observed, as he opened it and looked inside.

"That's ter put money in," spoke up Harry.

"Oh," and Hop appeared to be much enlightened. "If you gottee money you puttee in um pocketbook?"

"That's it; you have got it right, Mister Heathen."

Hop paused, as though he were in deep thought, for a few seconds, and then he quickly took the hat from Doc's head, and laying the pocketbook upon the tailboard of the wagon he placed the hat over it.

Then he moved the handkerchief in which the pair of

suspenders had been wrapped a few inches from it, and stepping back said:

"Um pocketbook allee samee under um hat, so be?"

"Yes, that's right," Harry answered, while Doc nodded in the affirmative.

"And um tlings you allee samee callee suspenders in um handkerchief, so be?"

"Yes, that's right," both men answered.

"Allee light; now you watchee. Me allee samee makee um suspenders gittee under um hat, and um pocketbook into um handkerchief."

The two men looked surprised for a moment, and then broke into a laugh.

"I reckon you're somewhat of a magician if you kin do anything like that," declared Doc.

"Lat light," Hop answered quickly. "Me allee samee gleat magician; me velly smartee Chinee."

"Well, go ahead an' do it, then."

"Allee light; you watchee."

Then Hop first touched the hat and then the handkerchief, muttering something that was not intelligible to his hearers.

Suddenly he stepped back and called out:

"Now you lookee. You finee um pocketbook in um hankelchief and um suspenders under him hat. Me makee changee velly muchee quickee."

With a smile on his face the man called Doc stepped over and took up the hat.

Sure enough, the suspenders lay there in full view.

"Well, by thunder!" he exclaimed, while his partner looked at the Chinaman in amazement.

"Lat allee light," was the Chinaman's retort. "Me makee no mistakee; me tellee whattee me do."

Doc now took the handkerchief and carefully unfolded it.

Then the pocketbook was brought to view.

If the two peddlers were surprised, so were the three miners, and the proprietor of the saloon, who had joined them to see what was going on.

"Well, by gum!" exclaimed Harry, shaking his head. "That's about as clever a thing as I ever seen done."

"Lat allee light," Hop answered, smilingly. "Me velly smartee Chinee. Me tellee you lat. Now len, we havee lillee dlink of tanglefoot."

Well satisfied that they could not sell him anything just then, the peddlers closed the back of the wagon, after first putting away the pocketbook and pair of suspenders.

They followed the Chinaman inside, and so did Tom and the other two men.

The proprietor went in ahead, of course, since he wanted to be ready to receive the cash that he knew was coming.

The drinks were put out and all hands indulged, and then Hop drew a pocketbook from under his coat and calmly opened it.

As the peddlers saw it they were more astonished than ever, for it was, according to their belief, the identical pocketbook that had been found under the hat but a minute or so before.

But Hop never let on that he noticed their looks or actions.

He calmly drew some money from the pocketbook and paid the bill.

"See here!" said Doc, in a stern tone, "where did you get that pocketbook from, heathen?"

"Me buy lat in Denver," came the innocent reply.

"Will you let me see it?" Doc asked, quickly.

Hop passed it over to him.

The peddler searched for a mark on the inside and quickly found it.

"You never bought that in Denver, heathen," he declared. "That came from out of our wagon. There's our mark on it."

"Lat alleee light," and Hop laughed good-naturedly. "You velly smartee Melican man, so be, but me alleee sameee velly muchee smartee, too. Me velly smartee Chinee. You keep you pocketbook. Me no wantee."

Then he quickly took it and dumped the money from it and passed it back.

"Boys," said the proprietor, grinning at the two peddlers, "you had better not let that heathen have a look at your goods ag'in. Why, if he was of a mind ter he'd steal everything you had."

"That's right," Doc answered. "But never mind. We'll all have a drink. That's one on us."

CHAPTER IX.

THE CAPTURE OF ARIETTA.

It will be necessary for us to now turn our attention to the desperadoes who left the saloon and went to the shanty.

It was Jack Gore's shanty they went to, as might be supposed, and as it was not a very large structure the one room it contained was quite well filled when all got inside.

"Set down, boys, if you kin find anything to set on," said the leader of the crowd. "We've got to git down to business. I want to have a little talk with yer. I'm much obliged to you fellows for stickin' to me. It seems that there was some as weakened, an' all 'cause they was so much afraid of Young Wild West that they jest couldn't help it. But that's all right. I'll git square with 'em afore many days, see if I don't."

A murmur of approval went up from the men at this.

Gore seemed to be pleased when he found that they were all with him.

"Do yer know what I've been thinkin' about, boys?" he went on to say, as he took on a knowing look and squatted upon the rickety table that was in one corner of the room. "Afore I left Bully John's place it struck me all of a sudden that ther way to git square with Young Wild West would be to sneak around to his camp an' catch them gals what's there. It may be a pretty tough job, but we kin manage it. I don't mean ter wait till night to do it, either."

"What are we goin' ter do with ther gals, if we gits 'em?" asked one of the villains.

"Well, I reckon we kin easy settle that after we git 'em," was the reply. "Never mind about that now. I ain't one as believes in countin' your chickens afore they're hatched. But by gittin' ther gals, or if we can't git all of 'em we'll git one, anyhow, we'll git Young Wild West after us hot. Then I reckon it won't be sich a hard job to put him out of ther way. That's ther main thing we want ter

do, yer know. His pardners will come with him, of course, an' they've got to take ther same medicine, along with him. But afore we go any further I reckon we'll have somethin' to drink. One thing about me is that I always keeps a good supply of tanglefoot in my shanty."

He got down from the table and quickly took a demijohn from a little closet.

Then he found a couple of tin cups, and removing the cork from the demijohn placed it upon the table and invited them to come up and join in a drink.

They were all quite willing to do this, and when all had taken a drink the Boss Desperado helped himself and then put away the demijohn.

"Now then," said he, "I want two of yer to keep a watch on Bully John's saloon. It are likely that Young Wild West an' his pards will come right back to ther camp, an' if they do we've got to wait until they leave it ag'in. It won't do to go foolin' around there while they're thi. Yer all know that."

"I reckon not," said one of them, shrugging his shoulders and showing signs of uneasiness. "Anyone as kin make sich a quick shot as he did is sartinly a dangerous customer. If he had been of a mind ter he sartinly would have put a bullet plumb through your heart, instead of skinnin' ther back of your hand to make yer drop your gun, Jack."

"Oh, I knows that," and the leader nodded his head. "He's ther Champion Deadshot of ther West, all right. I don't think there's a man livin' as kin hold a candle to him in that game."

Several of them had remarks to make about the young deadshot, and after a while Gore thought of what he had said about appointing two of the men to watch upon the saloon.

Then he selected two of them to do this, and they had not been at their post more than ten minutes before they reported that Young Wild West and his partners were on their way to their camp.

"Well," said the Boss Desperado, shrugging his shoulders, "I reckon that means that we'll have to wait a while. It may be that Young Wild West is keepin' a watch on this shanty, or has got someone else at Bully John's to do it for him. Ther chances is that some of ther boys has gone right over to his side, for they acted mighty like they was goin' ter do it, since they backed down and wouldn't come with us."

"Well, what are yer goin' ter do, anyhow?" asked a man, who had a cast in his left eye, and who was certainly anything but of a prepossessing appearance.

"I'll tell yer what we'll do, Andy," was the quick reply. "Since Tom has gone back on me I'll appoint you as my right bower. I'll take you an' Gus an' Mike, an' we'll crawl out of ther window an' then sneak around as close as we kin git to Young Wild West's camp without bein' seen. We'll wait there a while, an' maybe Young Wild West an' his pardners might take a notion to go back to ther saloon, or they might want ter go to ther store. Anyhow, I reckon we kin afford to wait, 'cause we've got a whole lot ahead of us—somethin' that is of ther greatest importance to us, I might say. Them three galoots has got to be done away with, an' that's all there is ter it. Why, if they have their way about it they'll sartinly reform ther camp. Diamond

Dive would be a mighty funny place with no desperadoes to run it, wouldn't it?"

The villain said this as if he actually thought it would be an awful calamity if such a thing should happen.

The three men he selected seemed quite willing to accompany him, so after a short conversation they all crept out through the little window that was in the side of the shanty furthest from the saloon.

"Ther rest of yer stay here till we come back, unless yer hear shootin' goin' on," said Jack Gore. "I don't know but that it would be a good idea if some of yer was to go an' git three or four horses an' have 'em ready. It might be that we'll be followed by Young Wild West an' his pards afore we're quite ready for it. In that case ther four of us will have to light out. How many of yer has got horses, anyhow?"

Only four of them had, it seemed, and one of them was a rather mean Indian pony, so he was informed.

"Well, that's all right. You git ther four of 'em an' fetch 'em here an' have 'em saddled an' bridled, too. Mine's in ther shed back here, so yer kin have him saddled, too. That will make five all together. Maybe it'll be jest as well if we only git one of ther gals. We kin tie her to one of ther nags, an' then if we have to light out we'll take her along with us. I'm willin' to take this risk, 'cause I know that even if we do have ter light out it won't be long afore we'll stand a good chance of droppin' Young Wild West an' his pards as they come after us. Now then, you understand what's to be done, don't yer?"

The villains answered that they did.

"Well, be sure yer come out through ther window, so no one kin see yer from ther saloon. Now then, boys, we'll be off."

The last was said to the three he had selected to go with him to Young Wild West's camp.

Gore's shanty was built virtually on the Mexican plan.

The sides were of adobe blocks, and the roof was thatched with coarse grass.

It was right at the edge of a cactus bed, too, and one looking at it from that side would have taken it to be a genuine greaser shanty.

The four villains crossed the narrow strip of sand, where nothing but cactus was growing, and were soon dodging ~~ver~~ ~~hind the rocks.~~

In this way they worked their way around until they found themselves approaching the spot where our friends were camped from the side opposite to where the collection of shanties stood.

They managed to get within a hundred feet of it, and then they found it would be dangerous for them to attempt to get any nearer.

It happened that it was just then that Cheyenne Charlie made the suggestion that they go over to the saloon and see what Hop was up to.

"I know putty well that ther heathen galoot will be havin' a whole lot of fun with them peddlers," he said, as he looked at Wild and Jim and grinned.

"No doubt of it, Charlie," Wild answered, with a nod of his head. "I feel just in the humor to see a little fun, so we'll go over. What do you say, Jim?"

"Certainly," Dart answered, quickly.

When Jack Gore and his three companions heard this conversation their delight knew no bounds.

Things were coming just the way they wanted them to.

"If they only hurry up an' git ther horses for us," said Gore, in a whisper, "we'll git away mighty quick. Of course there'll be a row raised when we grab one of them gals an' run away, an' we won't have more than time to git back to ther shanty. Young Wild West an' his pards will run right here, most likely, 'cause there'll be no end of screamin' from ther other two an' that heathen there. But we'll jest wait to give 'em a chance to git to Bully John's. Then I'll show yer jest how we're goin' ter do this thing."

His companions nodded, for they had the utmost confidence in their leader, and they felt that he was bound to carry out his plan.

They saw our hero and his two partners walk away from the camp, and then they watched them until they saw them enter the bar of Bully John's shanty.

"Now then, boys," whispered the leader of the desperadoes, as he drew a red handkerchief from his pocket, "I'm goin' ter use this here to gag ther gal with. It ain't no use to let her yell as we carry her off, 'cause that will let Young Wild West an' his pards know which way we're goin'. When I say ther word I want yer to help me grab ther gal, an' do it in a hurry. We'll take ther one with ther valler hair. She's Young Wild West's gal, anyhow."

"She's sartinly ther likeliest lookin' one of ther lot, anyhow," the man called Andy declared. "I wonder if we couldn't manage to git all three of 'em?"

"No," was the quick reply. "It wouldn't do. We couldn't manage to do it at all. We've only got one extra horse, yer know."

Andy said no more.

Then after a wait of perhaps half a minute Jack Gore gave a nod and started to creep closer to the camp.

Just then the girls were sitting near the two tents, and were very busy talking over what had happened.

Stealthily the four villains crept closer, and it was not until they were within a dozen feet of them that Anna happened to glance up and see them.

She uttered a startled cry and attempted to draw her revolver.

But Jack Gore had already drawn his gun, and so had his companions.

"Jest make one little yell, an' you'll die right where you are!" the Boss Desperado exclaimed, fiercely. "I want yer to understand that we don't value your lives any more than we do Young Wild West's. We'd jest as leave kill yer as not. We've come here to rob your camp, that's all."

This threw the girls off their guard, somewhat.

Arietta remained perfectly calm.

She expected to see one of the villains go into the tent and rummage about, while the other three held guard over them.

But instead of this happening, Jack Gore suddenly sprang upon her and pinned her arms to her sides.

At the same time he clapped the hand that held the handkerchief over her mouth tightly.

Then Andy quickly sprang to his assistance and tied the girl's arms behind her back.

The other two villains kept watch over Anna and Eloise

and Wing, who had risen to his feet, the picture of astonishment and alarm.

"Jest keep 'em right where they are, boys," said Gore. "Me an' Andy will git about a hundred yards away, an' then you kin come. We've got ther gal, all right, an' no mistake."

The villain gave a low chuckle, and then throwing Arietta over his shoulder, as though she had been nothing more than an infant, he started from the camp, followed by Andy.

A minute later the other two began backing away, at the same time threatening the girls that if they made an outcry, or offered to shoot, they would surely kill them.

They backed away until they got behind some rocks, and then they started on a run from the spot.

Then it was that Anna and Eloise began screaming loudly for help.

They both started to run for the mining camp, knowing full well that Wild and his partners should be notified quickly of what had happened.

If either of them had been as cool as Arietta certainly would have been, under the same circumstances, they would have set out in pursuit of the villains.

But they did what they thought was best, and they had no time to think it over, either.

CHAPTER X.

CONCLUSION.

Wild, Charlie and Jim were in Bully John's place listening to the peddlers as they related how Hop had deceived them with his sleight of hand when suddenly they heard the screams of Anna and Eloise.

The camp was not more than a couple of hundred yards from the saloon, so it was not strange that they should hear the girls' cries so plainly.

"There's something wrong at the camp, boys," said Wild, as he leaped for the door. "Come on; we'll see what it is."

His two partners were right after him, and they were quickly followed from the place by Hop.

The camp could not be seen from where they were, and as our hero led the way to the left, so he might get a view of it he suddenly caught sight of a prancing horse near the shanty of Jack Gore.

A man was trying to lead the horse around to the rear of the shanty, but the animal seemed to be balky, and refused to go with him.

The moment Wild noticed this it occurred to him right away that if anything had happened at the camp it was quite likely that the desperadoes were responsible for it.

The fact that they had a horse near the shanty caused him to think right away that probably it would be better for him to go straight there.

"This way, boys," he called out, as he started on a run, revolver in hand.

Charlie and Jim were right after him.

Meanwhile Jack Gore had succeeded in getting Arietta behind his shanty where the horses were waiting for them.

The villains who had been appointed to get the horses had worked quickly, and as they did not have to go far

for them they were all ready when their leader and Andy appeared carrying Arietta.

"Bring ther pony here—quick!" cried Gore. "We ain't got a minute to lose. Them gals back there is doin' some mighty tall yellin', an' you kin bet your life that Young Wild West an' his pards will find what's up in a jiffy."

One of the desperadoes attempted to lead the pony toward him, but the animal reared and plunged and came near getting away from him.

For a few seconds the pony kicked and reared about, but at length it was forced behind the shanty.

Then Arietta was quickly placed in the saddle, and a rope was passed around her and the pony two or three times, until she was firmly tied to the animal.

While this was being done Andy took care to hold his hand over her mouth so she could not scream.

But when the time came for them to start he  and mounted his own horse.

"You jest utter a cry an' I'll shoot yer," he cried, as he pointed his revolver at the girl.

Arietta looked at him sharply, and then she decided to take the chances.

"Wild, Wild!" she shouted, at the top of her voice. "This way. The desperadoes have got me. Hurry up!"

"Shet up!" roared Jack Gore. "Go on, boys. I'll start ther pony."

He raised the whip he had picked up and called for the steed Arietta was bound to go ahead.

But instead of doing so the cranky animal braced itself and uttered a savage whinny.

It was just then that Wild reached the front of the shanty.

As he ran around it a startling sight met his gaze.

One of the gang was dragging Arietta's balking pony when Wild pulled out a revolver, with lightning speed, and shot at the line, cutting it in two!

It was certainly about the quickest shot the boy had ever made.

On a dead run, as he was when he rounded the corner of the shanty, he fired the shot that severed the lariat.

There was no time to take aim; he had simply thrown his gun that way and pulled the trigger.

He was so used to such things that it really would have been strange if he had missed.

A yell of rage sounded from the villains when they saw the pony turn and trot away to the front of the shanty.

But Jack Gore was now worked into a state of desperation.

Crack!

He fired a shot at Wild, and the boy's hat was knocked from his head, since the bullet struck it and passed through the crown.

Wild knew that the time for the Boss Desperado to step out had arrived.

Without any hesitation he turned his revolver upon him and pulled the trigger.

Crack!

Jack Gore gave a gasping cry and fell back.

Then his body turned over and he dropped to the ground and remained motionless.

So surprised had his companions been that they had failed to take the little advantage they had to get away.

Crack, crack!

Two shots came from the window of the adobe shanty.

Wild heard the bullets as they whistled past his ear, so he quickly ran around to the front.

Crack, crack! crack, crack!

Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart were shooting now, and down went the three villains who had accompanied Gore to the camp of our friends.

It must have been that those inside saw what had happened to their comrades, for they instantly began crying for quarter.

By this time several others had reached the scene, among them being the man called Tom.

"Come on, boys, an' surrender," he yelled at the top of his voice. "It ain't no use to buck ag'in Young Wild West an' his pard's."

Crack!

A shot was fired from the shanty and Tom made a grab for his left ear.

The blood trickled from it in a stream, showing that he had come very near losing his life.

"I'd like ter meet ther galoot as fired that shot on even terms," he called out, as he stood still, his revolver in his hand. "If you have got ther nerve to do it come out an' show yourself."

"All right, you traitor!" and then the door was suddenly thrown open and out dashed one of the desperadoes, firing as he came.

But he was over-anxious, and his bullets went wide of the mark.

Crack, crack!

Tom fired twice, and down he went.

"That settles you, McNab," he exclaimed, his eyes flashing. "There always was a little bad blood between us."

The door now being open Cheyenne Charlie ran up to it, holding a revolver in either hand.

Meanwhile Jim Dart had cut Arietta free from the pony, and she was now standing at a safe distance watching what took place.

The villains seemed afraid to come out of the shanty, especially after they saw that one of their number had been shot by Tom.

"You had better come out an' give yourselves up, boys," Tom called out. "You have made a mighty big mistake, an' yer know it. But since you didn't have no real hand in catchin' Young Wild West's gal, maybe he'll let yer off a little easy. There's a whole lot of us as has made up our minds to reform, an' you kin bet we're goin' ter stick to it. You have got a chance yet."

"That's right," Wild shouted. "Come out and surrender, and you shall have a chance to turn over a new leaf."

"Have a chance to git our necks stretched, more like it," a voice answered from within.

"You can believe what I say, you sneaking coyote," Wild retorted, quickly. "When I say a thing I mean it. I'll give you all just two minutes to get out of that shanty. If you come out and surrender and give the promise that you will behave yourselves in the future you will be allowed to go free. If you think it is best to stay where you are and fight it out we will start in to clean you out. We won't

give you a ghost of a show, either. Now then, take your choice."

It then sounded as though those inside were all talking at one time.

But it was not for long.

Out they came, one at a time, holding their hands over their heads and looking frightened and meek.

"Just take charge of them, Tom," said our hero, nodding to the reformed desperado. "Maybe you can make them understand what they are to expect. I have given my word that they shall go free, but that don't mean that they are to act in a treacherous way. They have got to behave themselves, or they will be shot down like dogs."

"Oh, they'll behave, all right, Young Wild West," Tom replied, as he gave a nod. "It are most likely that they've had quite enough of it. They've seen what four or five of their gang has got, an' that oughter be a lesson to 'em."

"We're goin' ter behave ourselves, Young Wild West," one of the ruffians spoke up, quickly. "You won't have no cause to shoot us. I'm mighty sorry for what I've done, an' ther rest is, too. But it was Jack Gore as led us on. He was a mighty good feller, in some ways, an' we felt it our duty to stick ter him."

"All right, then. You are now at liberty to do just as you like; but take my advice and keep straight."

Some of them thanked the boy outright, others gave a nod, and the rest walked away without doing either.

But they were no doubt very glad, and forgot about it.

Our hero knew that it was all over, so he walked over to where Arietta was standing, and taking her by the arm proceeded toward the saloon.

The two peddlers met them, and when Doc raised his hat and proposed three cheers for Young Wild West, there was hardly a man on the scene who did not join him.

"That's all right, gentlemen," said Wild, in his cool and easy way. "I'm used to being cheered, though I don't know as I'm always deserving of it. But it makes no difference. The desperadoes of Diamond Dive are pretty well tamed down. A great many of them will be mighty glad this happened, after they come to think it over, too. I feel certain of that."

"You can bet your life on that, Young Wild West," Tom declared. "I begun to think that way quite a little while ago. I know we've been runnin' things here in a mighty high-handed way, an' that's why Diamond Dive hasn't boomed up as much as it oughter. Why, there's been lots of good men drove away from here, jest 'cause Jack Gore took a notion ter do it. But Gore was a funny sort of man. He had a way of makin' us all drop into his notions, it seems. It was mighty hard ter drop away from him, but some of us managed to do it this morning."

"Yes, and I give you credit for it," Wild answered. "I consider that the eleven who turned away from him are pretty good fellows, if they are of a mind to be. These other fellows I don't know about. I suppose if they are bad at heart they will always be that way, though they may behave themselves as long as they find that it will pay better to do so."

By this time Anna and Eloise had reached the scene, and when the reformed desperadoes saw them they all took off their hats, and then Tom proposed a cheer for the only females who had stayed over night in Diamond Dive.

The cheer awoke the echoes, for everybody seemed to want to yell as loud as he could.

The two peddlers finally thought that there was a fine chance to sell some of their goods, since so many had gathered about.

Nearly every miner in the camp had heard the shooting, and the result was that they had left their work and were now gathered in the little square in front of Bully John's saloon.

Presently Doe began calling out at the top of his voice:

"This way, ladies and gents! Step up an' see our great line of goods. We have got everything that yer could possibly want ter buy, an' ther prices is so low that you're bound to buy as soon as you see 'em. This way!"

The girls were curious to see what they had for sale, and they promptly walked around to the rear of the wagon.

This was the cue for everybody to crowd up, and all save those who had come out of Jack Gore's shanty and surrendered were soon gathered there.

The peddlers began doing quite a business, too, though the prices were anything but cheap.

It was not long before Hop pushed his way up to the display and began examining some of the goods.

"Hold on there, Hop!" called out Harry, shaking his finger at him. "You had better keep your hands off. You're altogether too clever for us. I don't mean that you would steal anything, but this ain't no time for jokin'. We've got too much business on hand."

"Lat allee light," replied the Chinaman. "You gottee velly lillie stuff left, so be. You sellee outtee velly muchee quickee."

This part of it was quite true.

The stock in trade of the peddlers had dwindled down so much that there was really not much of a selection there.

Hop knew pretty well that the peddlers had received more than double the amount for some of the goods, so he decided to break up the business for a while.

He calmly lighted a cigar, and drew one of his home-made firecrackers from his pocket at the same time.

Then he proceeded to examine a pair of boots, in spite of Harry's advice to keep away.

But the clever Chinaman did not remain there long.

He waited until he had lighted the fuse of the firecracker and dropped it into one of the boots.

Then he stepped back and waited for the result.

It was not more than five seconds that he had to wait, either.

Bang!

The cracker exploded with a noise as loud as that of a small cannon, and the goods of the peddlers flew in every direction, while a dense smoke immediately settled upon the scene.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bully John. "The heathen has done ther same thing he done in my place last night."

Then he fairly doubled himself with laughter.

It was not long before the whole crowd joined in, with the exception of the peddlers, who were running about in wild dismay.

While Wild would not have sanctioned anything of the

kind, he could not help laughing, for the peddlers' sale had certainly been broken up in a hurry.

They seemed to take it good-naturedly, however, and they could well afford to, in fact.

They had really sold more goods, and received a higher price for them, than they had dreamed of doing when they first struck the camp.

Just as our friends were thinking about going back to their camp, they saw the desperadoes who had surrendered at the shanty walking toward them in single file.

The leader came right up to our hero, and taking off his hat, said:

"Young Wild West, we have talked it over, an' we've come to ther conclusion that we'll sign a paper to be good. You jest fix up ther paper an' we'll put our names to it right away. Them as can't write will let somebody else do it for 'em an' put their cross in. We want ter show yer that we mean business. We're goin' ter try an' be straight an' help boom up ther minin' camp. Everybody will be welcome here after this."

"Well, since you want to do that, I'll soon fix up a paper," the boy answered.

He was not long in doing this, and soon the names of all the men were attached to it.

That wound up their adventures at Diamond Dive.

The surviving desperadoes had certainly reformed, and not only the mining camp, but the whole world was the better for it.

Shortly after noon Young Wild West and his friends left the place and started for Tombstone.

As they were going away Bully John called out:

"Boys, I want yer to give three cheers for Young Wild West's Quickest Shot. When he cut ther rope that was holdin' his gal's pony it sartinly was ther quickest shot that was ever made. Now then, everybody j'in in."

With the cheers ringing in their ears, our friends rode off in search of fresh adventures.

THE END.

Read "YOUNG WILD WEST AND THE DEATH MINE; OR, ARIETTA BAFFLING THE CLAIM JUMPERS," which will be the next number (389) of "Wild West Weekly."

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Wild West Weekly

NEW YORK, MARCH 25, 1910.

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SOME GOOD ARTICLES.

An intelligent mule makes itself useful on the beach at St. Augustine, Fla., by hunting for turtles. When she has found one she turns it on its back and then hastens off to inform her master.

With their three-year-old baby in a go-cart, George Palmer and wife walked 350 miles from Ashcroft, B. C., to the Nechako Valley, in the northern wilds of the province, to take up land for farming purposes. Palmer had obtained the 160 acres of free land that he went after and is now busy making himself and his family a home.

A Danish engineer named Meardt, after several years of experiment, has evolved an important invention for concentrating beer in a hard substance, which, dissolved in water, gives an excellent liquor. One and a half kilos contain 18 liters after dissolution. This beer remains sound for a period of six months. Meardt has succeeded in producing with success different sorts of beer, including ale and stout. The highest authorities praise the quality of these liquors.

In December, as a Vermont farmer named Turner was driving into Bennington about 8 o'clock in the morning, he heard a dog running a fox in the woods. What he didn't hear, however, was the fox taking a short cut through the bushes and hitting the highway just in time to leap into the farmer's sleigh and nestle down in the straw and be carried two miles along the road. By that time he was rested, and the dog had been fooled, and Reynard leaped to the ground, looked around with a grin and made off.

"The Southern colored people cost me \$8 a month in food," said the manager of one of the biggest farms in California, "and they don't do \$20 worth of work. You see plainly there is no use paying them \$15 a month wages, or the balance would be on the wrong side. Mexican greasers cost me between \$8 and \$9 for food a month, but they will do a good \$1.50 worth of work a day. But take your husky young foreigner or native-born American worker. He costs less—about \$6 a month when you are catering on a big scale, but then he wants a choicer class of food; but then he works. I can afford to pay such young fellows \$2 or \$2.50 a day and have a bigger margin of profit than for the cheaper unskilled labor. Everything has got to make good on this farm on the profit side of accounts, from a blade of wheat up—or it goes."

In a lonely lighthouse on a jutting edge of lime rock on Rhode Island's coast Ida Lewis is rounding out fifty-three years of Government service. The nation's veteran keeper, she guards the entrance to Narragansett Bay. Hale in her sixty-five years of strenuous activity, she is still untiring, dauntless and brave. In the face of gale and storm, says the "American Magazine," she has snatched from the tumbling waters of her steady beacon twenty-three human lives. Five of these lives she saved last summer. She is a pensioner of the Carnegie Hero Fund, holds the Government First Class Medal for Bravery and the American Cross of Honor. Ida Walley Zoradia Lewis was made assistant keeper of Lime Rock Light by Congress in 1879 and succeeded her mother in 1887 as keeper. Her father was also keeper at his death in 1872. Known the country over for her life saving, she is a unique character. Her island home is full of mementoes of her valor and is the Mecca of tourists all the year. Modest and cheery, she talks little of her deeds, but can show a hatful of medals from the greatest societies of the land. The Benevolent Life Saving Association of New York and the Humane Society of Massachusetts have both honored her. The United States awarded her a grand medal in gold for saving two men off the light in a terrible storm on February 4, 1881. "This is home to me," she says, "and I hope the good Lord will take me away when I have to leave it. The light is my child and I know when it needs me even if I sleep." She has never had a vacation and has never asked for one.

GRINS AND CHUCKLES.

"Professor," said a senior, trying to be pathetic at parting, "I am indebted to you for all I know." "Pray don't mention such a trifling," was the reply.

Mrs. Newlywed—Does your husband ever talk in his sleep, Mrs. Longwed? Mrs. Longwed—No, dear, he talks in other people's sleep. He is a preacher, you know.

"Dr. Bingle has advised Coppersmith to take up motoring." "But I thought Bingle disapproved of motoring?" "Yes, he does. But in some way he had secured possession of a second-hand motor that he wanted to sell."

Bridget and Pat were sitting in an armchair, reading an article on the law of compensation. "Accordin' to this, whin a mon loses wan uv his sinses another gits more developed; for instance, a bloind mon gits more sinse uv hearin', touch, an—." "Sure, an' it's quite true," exclaimed Pat. "Ol've noticed it myself. Whin a mon has wan leg shorter than the other, begorra, the other's longer."

A Seattle man who grew rich had a son of whom he disapproved, and when the son was married against the father's wishes the father made him an allowance of twenty dollars a week and said that was all he could have. A while later he was discussing the matter with a friend of his pioneer days. "Do you think twenty dollars a week is enough for the boy?" he asked. "Well," replied the friend judicially, "I don't know about that." "It's a darn sight more than we had when we started in," argued the father. "Perhaps it is," said the friend, "but you must remember that times have changed. We used to dig clams for our dinner." "By George!" said the father, "I guess I have been too severe with him. I'll be kinder in the future. I'll buy him a spade and show him where the clams are."

THE SON'S VENGEANCE

By John Sherman.

During the early summer of 1858 I had occasion to take a business trip on the Mississippi river.

The great stream was fearfully flooded at the time, and the good mail steamboats on which I traveled from Cairo to St. Louis would often pass close to farm-houses and cabins along the inundated banks.

I had been chasing a famous burglar from New York to Cincinnati, and from the last-named city down the Ohio to Cairo.

Jack Thomas was the fellow's name, and he was originally from Cincinnati, where he was very respectably connected, as he was the only black sheep in a fine family flock.

At the hotel in Cairo I met an old friend who had served with me in the Mexican war, and whose name was Paul Sidney.

Paul was engaged in the lumber trade, and he was just returning from a successful trip down the river.

We dined together at the hotel in Cairo; and in the course of conversation I told him of my mission in that part of the country.

Paul became very much interested in the fugitive, and said: "Give me a description of him."

Drawing a daguerreotype from my pocket, I presented it to him, saying:

"That's his picture. It was taken in Cincinnati three years ago."

Paul looked at the picture for a moment, and then burst out:

"Why, I know the fellow, and he is a regular rip! He is married to a neighbor's daughter of mine. I'll bet a hundred I know where he is camping now."

"Where is that?"

"Just let me tell what I know about the fellow first, and then I'll put you on his trail, and help you to hunt the skunk down as well."

"I know the fellow as Phil Jarvis, and I know him to be connected with one of the worst gangs on this big river of ours."

"About five years ago my neighbor, Bolton, met him in St. Louis, and he was quite taken with the fellow, as he seemed to have plenty of money and he was rigged up in great style, besides being a good-looking man of twenty-eight or so, with a tongue just fit to impose on the innocent."

Old Bolton, who had a splendid place near mine, invited Phil Jarvis to spend some weeks at his house. The old man had two young sons at school and a pretty daughter of eighteen keeping house for him.

The fellow made love to the daughter like the mischief, and they were soon married on the sly in St. Louis.

"When the two boys came home from school, however, old Harry was to pay. They couldn't agree with Phil Jarvis at all. Then the old man and the young wife took sides against the boys, and they were driven from the house."

"The two Bolton boys met him at the village hotel on the afternoon they left their father's house, and they had a fight."

"On the morning after the fight, old Mat Bolton was found murdered in his bed, the drawers and closets in the room were

all ransacked, and his money, watch, and other valuables were shipped off.

"Then Betsy Jarvis swore that she saw her two brothers sneaking about the woods near the house on the previous evening, and the boys were at once arrested."

"On searching around my house, their father's watch was found in the barn, but none of the money was found with them."

"They admitted that they were in the wood in the evening watching to see their father alone, and ask him for some money to go down to New Orleans or away to California in search of their fortune."

"My young son of fourteen, who slept in a large back room with them, swore that they all kept awake talking until long after midnight."

"They were tried and acquitted."

"Being high-spirited youngsters, they left the neighborhood soon after, asserting that they would never take a dollar from their father's property until they had found and punished the real murderer."

"Who is the rascal whom you knew as Phil Jarvis," I remarked, "and whom I am after now, as Jack Thomas?"

"When the boys left our neighborhood, Phil Jarvis settled in their house with his wife. It was soon noticed that several strange robberies occurred in the neighborhood."

"One night, when we were all away from home at a house-raising, my place was robbed, and the blood-hound was missing. I tracked him over to the Bolton farm, where we found him dead in the wood I spoke about."

"As I was suspicious of Phil Jarvis, I summoned some of the neighbors, and we called him, for the purpose of arresting him and searching the house."

"It was near midnight when we got there, and every one appeared to be asleep. However, I knocked at the front door, and Mrs. Jarvis soon put her head out of the window and asked what we wanted."

"I answered that we wished to see her husband about the robbery of my house."

"Do you dare to accuse him?" she asked, firing up like a fury.

"We do!" I bluntly answered.

"The words were scarcely out of my mouth when they opened fire on us from inside, and three of our party fell badly wounded."

"From the fire opened on us, as well as from the yells and threats, we judged there was a large party in the house."

"Then they all made off to the river by some secret path."

"But did you not see anything of the young woman again?"

"She was seen in St. Louis three nights after, disguised as a young man. We have reason to believe that she joined the gang of river pirates of which her husband is one of the leaders."

"What has become of the house and farm?"

"Mrs. Jarvis sent an old man and his wife down from St. Louis to take care of the place. They live in the house sometimes for a month or two, and then go away for three months on a stretch. The neighbors say that the house is haunted even since old Bolton was murdered."

After some further conversation with Paul Sidney, I made up my mind to pay a visit to the old haunted house in the American Bottom.

I was particularly anxious to interview the old man and woman in charge of the place.

Before leaving Cairo I disguised myself in the rig of a raftsmen, and I traveled with Paul as one of his gang.

On the night of my arrival at Paul's farm, I learned that the old man and his wife had arrived at the Bolton home.

stead on the previous evening, and that they had secured provisions at the village as if they meant to make a long stay.

Then I set out to interview them.

As I approached the haunted house I saw a light in the kitchen, and then I went on boldly and knocked at the front door.

"Who's there?"

"Does Mr. Sidney live here?" I asked.

"No. He lives over two miles further on the road."

"Two miles further on? Thunderation, and I am dead played out now."

"Who are you?" asked a man's voice.

"I'm a raftsmen that worked for Paul Sidney. I came from St. Louis on foot to see him on business. If you'll give me a shake-down till morning, good people, I'll be ever so much obliged, as I am dead used up."

No. "We're only in charge here, but we can give you supper and a bed for the night. Come right into the kitchen."

I was soon in the kitchen, and making my observations, while the old woman busied herself to get me some supper.

The old woman was not very talkative, as she contented herself with asking me how long I had been rafting for Paul Sidney and how I liked him as an employer.

As I had fished up sufficient information, I was enabled to answer her in a very satisfactory manner.

While the old woman was waiting on me at supper I noticed that her hands were soft and white, but when she removed the cloth they were disfigured with wood ashes.

It did not take me long to learn that I was dealing with a young woman in disguise, and I soon after made up my mind that I had the old murdered man's daughter before me.

Well, I had taken my chances, and I must see the matter out.

When supper was over the old woman took up a lamp, and remarked "rations" "My old man is tired, and has gone to bed. I will show you to your sleeping-room, stranger. This way."

She led me up to the top of the three-story building, and then to a room at the back, as she said:

"I hope you will have a good sleep. As you are a stranger to us, you'll not think it mean if I bolt the door here on the outside."

Before I could reply, the bedroom door was closed on me, and the bolt outside secured by the woman.

I held the lamp in my hand, and I at once looked at the window, as well as around the room.

My worst fears were then realized, as I was a prisoner.

Sitting down on an old bed that had not been used for years, I commenced to ponder over my situation.

While thus engaged, a sickly feeling stole over me, and I sprang up, crying:

"Good Heavens! am I poisoned?"

"That's just your fix, Fox," cried a savage voice outside the door. "You took poison in that coffee, and you'll be a dead man before morning. You thought you were smart coming here, but you're not smart enough for Jack Thomas."

"Or his wife, either," cried the woman. "I saw you at Cairo with Paul Sidney, and I knew you would come spying about here."

I did not answer the fiends, but I ran to the window and fired my pistol, as a signal to my friend.

Then I made an effort to get rid of the poisoned coffee, and I succeeded.

Fortunately, I had a small flask of brandy in my pocket, and I took a drink.

Then I put my head to the barred window and inhaled the night air, firing the revolver once again at the same time.

Shouts and the galloping of horses were soon heard along

the road, and I knew that my friend and his friends were hastening to my rescue.

But would the murderers take the alarm in the meantime and escape?

Dashing to the door, I flung my whole weight against it, and, to my joy, the bolt outside gave way on the instant.

With the lamp in one hand, and the revolver in the other, I rushed fearlessly down the stairs, just as my friends burst in at the front door.

I caught a glimpse of a woman's form dashing out the back way, and I made after her, crying:

"There they go! 'Tis Phil Jarvis and his wife, old friend!"

The man was ahead of the woman in the back yard, and he held a heavy club in his left hand and a pistol in the other.

Wheeling around he fired at us, and I returned the fire at once.

The rascal uttered a cry of pain, let fall his pistol, and dashed off toward a wood.

The woman stumbled and fell, and she was soon secured.

I ran after the murderer as fast as I could, but two active forms soon darted on ahead of me, and one of them also carried a heavy stick in his right hand.

"They're the Bolton boys!" cried Paul Sidney, as he dashed on with me.

"They tracked the rascal from St. Louis, and they're just in time to avenge their father. Thunders! but Sam is on him now!"

The elder lad was on the murderer with a vengeance, as he had caught up with him just on the verge of the wood.

His brother was close behind him.

"Leave him to me, Ben!" cried the elder brother, as he raised his club.

Jack Thomas held up the wounded arm to ward off the blow, but the stick in the hands of Sam Bolton fell on the murderer's neck, and he was crushed to the earth.

There was a case for Judge Lynch in that wood near by that night.

Before Jack Thomas was strung up, he confessed to the murder of old Bolton.

The wicked wife took poison on the same night and died.

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25 CE military work.

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Tom q^{ui}ckly sprang to the sky following the instructions contained

But the Boss Desperado had only been self-defense made easy.

porarily, and as he felt himself being assisted, should obtain one of

he came to entirely.

"Come on, Jack! We've got five minutes ter T.—Containing full

sight. It's Young Wild West an' his pard'ner W. Macdonald.

heard of 'em. There's lots of our gang as know

Jack Gore permitted himself to be assisted

Tom helped him to mount, and then w^{he}reared from.

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